MOSCOW

1937

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FOREWORD

ACTUALLY, this account should bear the title: "Moscow, January 1937," for things are moving so quickly in Moscow that many observations lose their truth in a very few months. I met people there who knew their Moscow well, but who hardly recognised their own city when they saw it again after an absence of six months. Nevertheless, I am writing down "Moscow 1937," and I am allowing myself this latitude because it is not my intention to present a precise objective picture. To attempt as much after a ten-weeks' visit would be absurd. Rather shall I merely give my own personal impressions for those of my friends who may be anxious to know what I thought of Moscow and what I saw there.

The object of this little book

Since, therefore, I am fully aware that the conclusions I am setting forth are entirely personal, I am at once indicating the hopes and fears which accompanied me on my visit

to the Soviet Union, leaving it to the reader to assess how far my vision was coloured by my feelings and preconceived ideas.

The creed of reason

I set out as a sympathetic visitor. I sympathised inevitably with the experiment of basing the construction of a gigantic State on reason alone, and I went to Moscow hoping that the experiment was succeeding. However little I wished feelings and the spirit of criticism to be eliminated from the private lives of individuals, and however barren appeared to me a purely rational existence, I was as completely convinced that if a social system is to prosper, it must be built up on judgment and reason. We in Central Europe have experienced with horror what happens when States and laws are based upon prejudices and passions in the place of reason. I have never been able to look upon world history in any way other than as a bitter and unceasing struggle waged by a thinking minority against a stupid majority. I have always ranged myself on the side of reason, and it was thus inevitable that I should sympathise with the gigantic experiment which is being conducted from Moscow.

Yet, from the first my sympathies were mixed

with doubts. Practical Socialism could only be established by means of the dictatorship of one class: and it followed that the Soviet Union was a dictatorship after all. But since I am a writer, and that because I must be, I am driven from within to give unrestricted expression to what I feel, think, see, and experience, regardless of individuals, class, party, or ideology. And so, despite my personal leanings, I was mistrustful of Moscow. True, the Soviet Union had drawn up a free and democratic constitution, yet I had heard from credible sources that in practice this freedom had been badly distorted, and my doubts were confirmed by a little book of André Gide's which appeared just before my departure.

Doubt and mistrust

So I arrived at the Soviet frontier sympathetic, curious, and doubting. The honours with which I was received in Moscow served to increase my uncertainty. Good friends of mine, and, moreover, quite intelligent individuals, had had their judgment clouded by the effusiveness of the German Fascists, and I wondered whether for me, too, the appearance of men and things was not being distorted by personal vanity. Then, again, I told myself, I

First impressions and Potemkin villages

should certainly only be allowed to see the successes, and it would be difficult for me, ignorant of the language as I was, to penetrate the surface and see beyond any veil which it might be necessary to arrange for my benefit.

Fault-finding due to lack of comfort

On the other hand, in Moscow one could quite easily be led to an unjustifiably adverse opinion by the many minor discomforts which make daily life difficult there and be blinded to the important things. Very soon I realised that even so eminent a writer as André Gide had had his judgment warped by petty annoyances of this kind. And I, too, found it most difficult while in Moscow to remain impartial and prevent the amenities or annoyances of the moment from influencing me unduly in one direction or the other.

Often, too, the naïve pride and enthusiasm of the Soviet people made it harder for me to arrive at a fair and well-balanced estimate. The civilisation of the Soviet Union is young, built up amidst unexampled struggles and privation, and when there comes to the people of Moscow a guest to whose opinions they rightly or wrongly attach importance, they immediately ply him with questions as to how

he likes this and what he thinks of that. Moreover, I arrived during a troubled period. Fascist leaders were directing threatening and warlike speeches against the Soviet Union; there was fighting in Spain and on the borders of Mongolia; in Moscow itself a political trial was in progress which was exciting the masses. A host of questions had arisen, and the people of Moscow did not hesitate to ask them. But I am slow to form an opinion and like to weigh up the pros and cons in peace, and so avoid a hasty and premature judgment. Naturally there were things I did not like, and as a writer I take some pride in saying exactly what I think—a tendency which has more than once caused not a little awkwardness. Even within the Soviet borders, I was unwilling to suppress criticisms I felt bound to make: but at a disturbed time it was not always easy for an honoured guest to find a suitable form for such criticisms or terms which avoided at the same time indecision and tactlessness.

Further difficulties in forming a correct opinion

I am happy to be able to say that my frankness was never misconstrued. The newspapers made a feature of what I said, even when it might not have been welcome to the

Frankness for frankness

authorities. There was, for example, my desire for greater tolerance in certain directions, my amazement at the exaggerated and occasionally vulgar worship of Stalin, or my dissatisfaction with the explanation of the forces influencing the accused to make their confessions in the political trial which I have already mentioned—the second trial of Trotsky's supporters. In private conversation, too, the leading people proved ready to receive criticism and exchanged frankness for frankness. And the very candour with which I expressed my criticisms obtained for me information which would hardly have been given me otherwise.

Should one speak well of the Soviet Union?

On my return to the West I had to decide whether I should tell what I had seen in the Soviet Union. It would have been no problem had I, like others, found little in the Union that was favourable and much that was not. This would have pleased everybody. I had, however, found more light than shadow; but the Soviet Union is unpopular, and anything I had to say was unwelcome, as I quickly discovered. In Moscow I had not published much on my impressions, less than two hundred lines, which was little enough, and by no means

unqualified praise; but even these few lines, since they were not entirely deprecatory, were mutilated and abused. Was I to say any more about the Soviet Union?

I was exhausted by my efforts to see and understand clearly, and I told myself in the first days after my return that it was for me to give shape to things and not merely expression, and so I decided to remain silent until my experiences had crystallised. Better not

But this excuse failed to quieten my conscience for long. The Soviet Union is engaged in a struggle with many enemies, and is receiving only half-hearted support from its allies. Stupidity, ill-feeling, and inertia are at work in making suspect, traducing, and denying everything in the East that is likely to bear fruit. But no writer who has seen something great should ever withhold his evidence, even if the thing is unpopular and his words are distasteful to many. But being a writer, I do

Therefore I am bearing witness.

I

WORK AND LEISURE

I CAME to the Soviet Union from countries where complaints are the general rule and whose inhabitants, discontented with both their physical and spiritual conditions, crave for change. The many cries of despair rising from the peoples under the Fascist dictatorships are even more insistent than elsewhere, and this regardless of the fact that criticism of any kind is condemned as treason and dealt with accordingly. But fear of prisons and concentration camps was powerless to subdue the voices of anger and despair.

Discontent in the capitalist world

I was at first surprised and dubious when I found that all the people with whom I came into contact in the Soviet Union—and this includes casual and obviously spontaneous conversations—were at one with the general scheme of things, even if they were sometimes

Content in the Soviet Union

critical of minor points. Indeed, everywhere in that great city of Moscow there was an atmosphere of harmony and contentment, even of happiness.

Material shortcomings

For weeks I believed that fear was the motive force underlying these manifestations, and I was mistrustful of them, too, in face of the fact that Moscow lacks so many things which we of the West consider indispensable. Life there is by no means as easy as the Government would have it.

Food

True, the years of hunger are over. In the many shops food of all kinds can be obtained in great variety and at prices well within the reach of the average citizen of the Union, the worker and the peasant. All kinds of preserves are especially cheap and more than usually good. According to statistics, more and better food is available there per head of the population than in Germany or Italy, and, as far as I could tell during a short stay, these statistics do not lie. People with modest incomes entertain an unexpected guest with surprising lavishness, although, on the other hand, the preparation of good and plentiful material often betrays a lack of interest and artistry. But your

citizen of Moscow certainly enjoys his food; it is only recently that his larder has become so well stocked. In two years—from 1934 to 1936—food consumption per head in Moscow increased by 28·8 per cent, and, to make a comparison with pre-war statistics, the consumption of meat and fat per head increased between 1913 and 1937 by 95 per cent, that of sugar by 250 per cent, of bread by 150 per cent, and of potatoes by 65 per cent. Small wonder that after so many years of hunger and privation the citizen of Moscow feels that to-day his diet leaves little to be desired.

Moreover, anyone who knew the earlier Moscow would be astounded by the improvement in clothing. In 1936 alone, expenditure on clothing increased by 50·8 per cent, although anyone visiting Moscow for the first time must still find the standard of dress extremely low. Granted, the essentials can be obtained, and some of them, as, for example, sheepskins and rubber footwear, amazingly cheaply, but most of them are really expensive. Ease, however, is a thing unknown. If anyone, man or woman, wants to be well and tastefully dressed, he must go to considerable trouble,

Clothing

and even then will never quite succeed. I was entertaining a few friends one day, and amongst them was an exceptionally well-groomed actress, whose dress was much admired. "I borrowed it from the theatre," she confessed.

What there is and what there is not

There is a lack of other daily necessities which is very apparent to anyone coming from the West. There is, for instance, a very poor selection of paper of any kind, and the shops only stock it in small quantities; medical requisites and cosmetics, too, are scarce, and an inspection of the shops reveals much that is crude. On the other hand, there are many things which are attractive in design and price—writing-lamps, fuel containers, cameras, and gramophones. Obviously demand is increasing concurrently with prosperity. Whereas in the lean years the bare necessities sufficed, there is now a growing demand for luxuries. It is swelling to such an extent that it is outstripping production, and queues can often be seen outside the shops.

Other shortcomings make everyday life in Moscow difficult. The public conveyances do, indeed, operate efficiently, and the naïve pride of the local patriots in their underground railway

Means of transport

is justified: it is undoubtedly the finest and most comfortable in the world; but the trams are often overcrowded, and it is difficult to get a taxi. Once a friend of mine who lives twenty-five miles from Moscow missed the train which was to take him across the frontier, because after hours of vain effort he was unable to secure accommodation for his luggage.

Petty inconveniences

The bureaucrats, too, are helping to cramp life in Moscow. Declarations and permits are necessary for the renting of residences, for travelling, for the acquisition of fuel and oil for cars, for admission to public buildings, and for much else. *Propusk*—a permit—is one of the first Russian words the foreigner has to learn. Moreover, an excursion is no easy matter for such as him. In the vicinity of Moscow there are but few hotels and restaurants, and, while the rest-homes are numerous, they are only open to members of the occupational organisations. The accredited Minister of a foreign country once told me—and he was only half joking—that often on his holidays he stood longingly outside the workers' swimming-pools, but could gain admission nowhere.

Worst of all is the housing problem. The

Housing deficiencies

greater part of the population lives herded together in mean and tiny rooms, which in winter are almost airless. Queues form outside the lavatories. Eminent politicians, writers, and scientists, with large incomes, live more primitively than many a humble citizen of the West.

And still contented

I often wondered, particularly during the first weeks of my visit, whether these everyday inconveniences were not bound to wear down the contentment of which I have already spoken; but such is not the case. The Soviet people have endured many long years of the worst forms of privation, and the times when light and water were becoming increasingly scarce, and they lined up outside the shops for bread and herrings, are still fresh in their memories. Their economic planning has vindicated itself and has got rid of these gravest miseries; in the near future the less important ones which still exist will disappear too. The citizens of Moscow joke about these minor inconveniences, usually, if not always, with complete good humour, but they never think of allowing these shortcomings to blind them to the big things which life in the Soviet Union

alone can offer, and, if you dwell for long on the minor drawbacks of their everyday life, they will take the aggressive and turn the tables by declaring that they, for their part, cannot imagine how you can endure life in a capitalist country.

"How can you live," they ask me, "in the bad moral atmosphere which surrounds you? Even if you yourself can live and work in peace and comfort, are you not disturbed by the misery around you, which could be done away with by a more reasonable order of things? Are you not disturbed by the manifest folly which prevails everywhere? How can you endure life in a country whose economy is determined, not by rational planning, but by desire for private gain? Are you not troubled by your insecure, hand-to-mouth, decadent mode of life? German statistics show that with a population of 65 millions there are 52 suicides per day. We have 180 million people and the average daily number of suicides is 34. And you have only to look at the youth of the capitalist countries and compare it with ours. How many young people in the West are able to choose the vocation which best suits their tastes and

The unhappy life in the West

abilities? And who amongst us is not able to do this? How many of your young people must wonder anxiously: 'What is to become of me? What am I to turn to? Is not the future which lies before me empty, and rather a threat than a hope?'"

Such arguments are not mere propaganda: they obviously spring from conviction. The fact that there is a self-evident plan behind the whole structure of the national economy consoles the individual for the shortcomings of his private life—in so far as he is conscious of these shortcomings at all. For the glaring contrast between the past and the present makes it easy for him to forget any deficiencies. Anyone with eyes to see, or whose ears can recognise the true or false in human speech, feels at every turn that it is no empty phrase when everywhere in the country the people talk of their "happy life."

And the happy life of the Soviet citizens

They know that their prosperity is no vague possibility which may never materialise, but the inevitable outcome of a rational planning. They have been taught that the foundations of a house must first be laid before the interior can be fitted up. The raw materials had first to be

Better and better from day to day

procured, the heavy industries built up, and the machines obtained, before work could be started on the production of consumer-goods and manufactured articles. The Soviet citizens realised this, and were ready to bear with the deficiencies in their private lives. By now it is clear that the planning was right, that the sowing was rational, and that a rich and happy harvest will be reaped; and the Soviet people are enjoying with intense satisfaction the first-fruits of this harvest. They see that to-day, just as they had been promised, there are thousands of things to be had, things of which no more than two years ago they would hardly have dared to dream. And the citizen of Moscow enters his stores just as a gardener who has sown much goes into his garden to see what else has come up to-day. Daily he sees something new—contentedly he sees caps, perhaps, then buckets, then cameras. . . . And the fact that the leaders have been as good as their word so far is the people's guarantee that the Plan will materialise increasingly and that things will improve from month to month. As surely as the people of Moscow know the train leaves for Leningrad at such and such a time,

so surely do they know that in two years they will have clothes, and in ten years houses, as many and as varied as they require.

The peasant yesterday and to-day

It is the peasants who are most deeply conscious of the difference between the wretched past and the happy present, and they comprise the huge majority of the population. They never tire of illustrating the contrast. Fathers tell their children of the bad old times, and the misery and darkness of life under the Tsars: we know something of this life from the descriptions of the Russian classics. For the best part of the year the peasants lived on hot water and a little tea, and dry, indigestible bread. They could neither read nor write. Their mental equipment consisted of a scanty vocabulary for the designation of material things, and the scraps of mythology which the pope had brought to them. Now these people have food in plenty. They carry on their farming intelligently and with increasing success. They have clothes, cinemas, wireless, theatres, and newspapers. They have learned to read and write, and their children can follow the occupation to which they are attracted.

The recognition, therefore, confirmed by the

experience of twenty years, that the State is not reserving the enjoyment of the good things for the few to the exclusion of the majority, but that it really is helping the whole in the most reasonable way, has become inherent in the mentality of the whole population, and has created a confidence in the leaders such as I have never found elsewhere. In the West, distrust of the assurances and promises of the Governments has been nourished by repeated disillusionment to such an extent that the peoples are resigned from the beginning to the very events which the Governments have promised shall never take place. In the Union, on the other hand, there is complete confidence that the promises of those in authority will be fulfilled to the letter. We are familiar with the trouble and careful preparations which are necessary before a Fascist State can extort from its reluctant masses " spontaneous expressions of joy." I have seen exemplified in a hundred small ways with what simple joy the people of Moscow throng to their demonstrations.

Acceptance and confidence

There can be no doubt that the difference between the advantages and security which the Soviet citizen enjoys as compared with the

subjects of the Western States seems to him so enormous that the inconveniences of his daily life dwindle into nothing. The Socialist economic plan guarantees to every individual an intelligent occupation at all times and a care-free old age. Unemployment has definitely been removed, and with it exploitation. The amount of work which the State requires from each of its citizens leaves the individual free to spend a great part of his energy as he feels inclined. Every sixth day is a holiday, a seven-hour day is in operation, and everyone has a full month's holiday with pay. The meanness of the private dwellings is compensated by the comfort of the bright and roomy recreation hostels which are at the disposal of the Soviet citizens for their leisure time in enormous numbers and at the lowest prices.

Right to work and to leisure, and secure old age

The individual's feeling of complete security, his comfortable certainty that the State is really there for him and not he for the State, goes far to explain the naïve pride with which the Moscow citizens speak of "Our factories," "Our agriculture," "Our buildings," "Our theatres," and "Our army." But they are proudest of all of "Our youth."

This youth is certainly the Soviet Union's greatest asset. The youth

Everything is done for the young that is humanly possible. Everywhere one finds numerous and excellently appointed crèches and kindergartens. A network of schools covers the whole of this huge State, and their numbers are increasing with incredible rapidity. There are children's playgrounds, children's cinemas, children's cafés, and excellent children's theatres. The older ones are catered for by the universities, by innumerable courses in the various trades and in the collective economic system of the peasantry, and by the cultural centres of the Red Army. The physical conditions in which the Soviet youth grows up are more favourable than anywhere else in the world. cared for by the State

Most of the letters which I receive from young people outside the Soviet Union are S O S messages. Countless young people in the West cannot find either their physical or mental levels. Not only have they no hope of getting the work they like, but no hope of work of any kind. They do not know which way to turn, nor what meaning to attach The youth of the Western countries

to their lives: all paths seem to lead nowhere.

How cheering it is, after such experiences, to meet those young people who have been able to reap the first benefits of their Soviet upbringing, these young intellectuals from peasantry and proletariat. How sturdily and with what calm confidence do they face life, feeling that they are organic parts of a purposeful whole. The future lies before them like a well-defined and carefully tended path through a beautiful landscape. Whether they are speaking at meetings or talking privately, there is not a trace of artificiality in the naïve enthusiasm with which they refer to "their happy life"; they are unable to repress the happiness which fills them. When, for example, a young woman student of the technical college, who a few years back was a factory worker, says to me: "A few years ago I could not write a single sentence of correct Russian, and to-day I can discuss with you in passable German the organisation of an American automobile factory," or when a young girl from the land, glowing with happiness, declares at a meeting: "Four years ago I could neither read nor

The Soviet Union

write, and to-day I can discuss Feuchtwanger's books with him," then their pride seems justified. It springs from so deep a contentment with the Soviet world, and with the speakers' own positions in it, that one cannot listen without feeling the same elation.

Peasant and proletarian intelligence

According to the statistics of Western countries, the percentage of students of peasant and proletarian parentage is exceedingly small —and it is an inevitable consequence that countless talented people must forgo proper development only because their parents are poor, while numbers of the untalented are compelled to study because their families have the means. It is an inspiration to see in the Soviet Union millions who, twenty years ago, would have wasted away in the most complete ignorance, throng enthusiastically into the educational centres, now that the doors are open to them. Just as the Soviet Union has reclaimed enormous unused natural resources, so has it also cultivated an abundance of mental power which had hitherto lain fallow. The one was no less successful than the other. Eagerly, here, sons and daughters of the peasantry and proletariat, with their young vigorous brains

set upon the new material, devour and digest it, and the freshness which they bring to bear upon the knowledge of three thousand years, finding new and unexpected facets, is heartening to those who, after post-war experiences, had almost despaired of the future of civilisation.

Stupid and arrogant?

André Gide speaks of the arrogance of this younger generation. He tells how he was asked whether there was an underground railway in Paris too; how they would not believe that Russian films might be shown in France also; how they declared superciliously that it was superfluous now to spend time on foreign languages, since they had nothing more to learn from abroad. When one considers that Union newspapers are always making comparisons between foreign underground railways and those of Moscow, and always congratulating themselves on the success of Soviet films, in France in particular, one is forced to conclude that André Gide has chanced upon exceptionally impudent and stupid young people. In any case, such questions were never put to me, although I had innumerable conversations with young Soviets; and I was, moreover, pleasantly surprised to find how many of these

students know German, English, or French—or two or three of these languages.

It is a joy for an author to know that his books are in these young Soviets' libraries. In almost every country in the world there are interested readers who make intelligent enquiries of the author. But more often than not, in the West, books are merely an elevated pastime—a luxury. For the Soviet reader there seems to be no dividing-line between his own reality and the world of his books. He adopts the same mental attitude towards the characters of his books as he does towards his actual acquaintance—quarrels with them, rebukes them, and sees actuality in the books' events and characters. I had several opportunities of discussing my own books with readers who were ordinary factory workers, engineers, labourers, clerks. They had a thorough knowledge of them, often more thorough than I had myself. It was not always easy to cope with the points they raised. These young peasant and proletarian intellectuals come along with most unexpected questions. They defend their opinions respectfully, but firmly and pertinaciously. They do not allow the author to take refuge

Soviet readers

behind æsthetic dogma, or talk of literary technique and poetic licence. He is the creator of his characters, and is responsible for them, and, should he offer half-truths in reply to the polite but resolute doubts and objections raised by his young readers, he immediately becomes aware of their dissatisfaction. There is, indeed, much to be learned from conversations with such people.

Infectious happiness

The feeling of strength and happiness which emanates from the Soviet youth is certainly infectious, and makes it possible to understand the confidence of the Soviet citizens in their future—a confidence which stops them from dwelling upon the shortcomings of their present life.

An example

Perhaps the following will show how this acceptance of present conditions is inextricably bound up with confidence in the future.

I have already referred to the mean and cramped housing accommodation in Moscow, where everyone is huddled together like so many sheep in a pen. But the citizen of Moscow realises that architecture, too, is being

developed in conformity with the principle which considers the community first and then, and only then, the individual, and the fineness of the public buildings and public works generally affords him some consolation. The many clubs for manual and " black-coated " workers, the numerous libraries, parks, and athletic grounds, are spacious and well appointed. The public buildings are admirably representative of the principle, while electrification has made Moscow by night shine as brightly as any city in the world. The citizen of Moscow spends a great part of his time in public. He loves the life of the streets, and likes to stay in the rooms of his club or meeting-house. He is a passionate debater, and would rather discuss anything than meditate on it in silence. The pleasant rooms of his club make his own unlovely home more bearable. But, above all, he is compensated for his ugly dwelling by the promise that Moscow shall become beautiful.

Moscow as she appears to-day

That this promise is more than an empty slogan is proved by the energy which has been expended during the past two years in completely rebuilding the city.

Moscow shall become beautiful

Mathematics and reason, the hall-marks of

the Soviet Union, are especially evident in the elaborate plan for the reconstruction of Moscow. Perhaps there is no quicker way of gaining a deeper insight into the character of the Soviet Union than by examining the model at the Architectural Exhibition showing the Moscow of the future.

The rebuilding of Moscow

As a matter of fact, the individual exhibits on view at the Moscow Architectural Exhibition seem to me neither better nor worse than those elsewhere. The work of three architects only struck me as being creatively revolutionary. Apart from these, one finds a classicism and eclecticism which conveys little. But Soviet architecture assumes a very different aspect when one stands before the plans and models which show how the leading architects have either completely rebuilt towns or reconstructed them and how they intend to carry on with such work in the future.

Individual architecture

This is best exemplified by the reconstruction of Moscow. Reconstruction has, of course, been going on since the beginning of the Revolution. Digging, excavating, hammering, and building are incessant everywhere. Streets vanish and streets appear. What seems large one day

seems small the next when a tower suddenly overshadows it. Everything moves and changes unceasingly. As recently as July 1935, the Committee of the People's Commissariat decided to legislate for the alterations; that is, to mould the outward appearance of the city as systematically as the internal structure of the Union —and that within ten years. What has been accomplished since July 1935 and what will be accomplished in the next eight years can best be seen from the model of the Moscow of the future at the Architectural Exhibition.

The planning of Moscow

One stands on a small raised platform before the gigantic model which represents the Moscow of 1945—a Moscow which bears the same relationship to the present-day Moscow as the latter does to that of the Tsars, which was little more than a large village. The model is electrically lighted, and increasing numbers of blue, green, and red lines show the course of the streets, underground railways, and motor roads, and demonstrate with what devotion to system the housing and communications of the great city will be constructed. The vast diagonals which divide up the city, the circular roads which intersect them, the boulevards, the

The model of the new Moscow

radial streets, the primary and secondary roads, blocks of offices and flats, industrial buildings and parks, schools, Government offices, hospitals, educational and recreational centres—all are laid out with geometrical precision. Never before has a city of millions of inhabitants been completely rebuilt with such meticulous regard for the laws of suitableness, and hence beauty, as this new Moscow. Innumerable tiny points and lines flash out to mark the sites of schools, hospitals, factories, stores, and theatres. The River Moscwa, one is told, will in future follow such a course, and this will be the line of the Moscwa-Volga Canal; here there will be bridges, and here a tunnel will be driven under the river; here will be streets for the quick transport of food, and here those for other transport, and from here will be controlled the water-supply of the city, its electricity and its heating.

In all this there is more purposeful cohesion than anywhere else in the world. For in other cities time was allowed to set the problems, and it was only after they arose that the streets and traffic were regulated in an attempt to solve them. It was inevitable that this was done

nore or less fortuitously, and never completely ·ationally. Not only had these cities no organic ɔrigin and growth, but the late adjustment of :heir problems was hindered and cramped by :he fact that it came into conflict with innum-ɛrable private interests, and there existed no authority which could have overridden these interests for the benefit of the community as a whole. Everywhere the resistance of profit-seeking landowners made a rational town planning impossible. The Préfet Haussmann, who in the middle of the nineteenth century planned Paris anew, writes: " In order to carry out the plan elaborated by the Ingénieur Belgrand for the water-supply, the city would have to acquire the sources of the Somme and Soude. But the private owners will not discuss the matter, and the whole scheme is thereby frustrated." And when in 1923 Tokio was rebuilt after its destruction by earthquake, 40 million yen had to be paid to the private owners for 300 acres of land which was necessary for the expansion—a quarter of the real requirements—and the expansion as originally planned had to be abandoned.

Impediments to town planning in capitalist countries

None of these restrictions exist for the Moscow

Advantages in the case of the planning of Moscow

of the future. The planning is not hindered by the fact that it must be adapted to existing evils. Everything is from the first an essential part of an intelligently conceived plan.

Details

The construction of the three diagonals, each ten to thirteen miles long, which serve as the principal roads of the city, and of the three new radial streets, the cutting of the two parallel streets, the twofold widening of Red Square, the arrangement of the blocks of dwellings, the demolition of all industrial buildings liable to outbreaks of fire or injurious to health, the erection of the broad wharves, of the eleven new bridges, and of the new railway viaducts, the distribution of the district heating stations, the 530 new school buildings, the 17 great new hospitals, the 27 promenades and 9 huge new stores, the expansion of the city by nearly 80,000 acres, the construction of the great green belt six miles wide which is to encircle the city, and of the 52 parks radiating from the centre of the city and the 13 great parks on its outskirts—all of this is so finely balanced and purposefully co-ordinated that the most apathetic onlooker must be moved by the beauty and grandeur of the project.

Originators

And the fathers of this project are N. S. Chruchtchev, L. M. Kaganovitch, and Joseph Vissarionovitch Stalin.

Indeed, one experiences a profound æsthetic satisfaction in contemplating the model of this great city, a city built from its foundations in accordance with the dictates of sound sense, and the first of its kind since man wrote history. While one gazes at the gigantic model the architects explain it. They tell how in the first year, 1935–1936, they wanted to build schools in these places and those places, and the electric points light up, and are followed by more and more lights to show where schools actually have been built. They point to the places where in the first eighteen months hospitals were to be erected, and the lights indicate where hospitals now stand completed—again many more than originally planned. For anyone who wants to examine the details of any one part of the model which represents a certain quarter of the town, the sections are automatically separated and one can peer into the future city and choose one's favourite spots.

The model again

What most thrills the onlooker is the knowledge that this model is no mere plaything, no

fanciful Utopia of a Western architect, but that in eight years it will be a reality. This is a certainty in face of what has already been accomplished and the amazing difference between the Moscow of yesterday and the Moscow of to-day. The Moscow of the last Tsars had 240,000 square yards of streets and squares, asphalted or paved with hewn stone. To-day there are 4,000,000 square yards. In the old Moscow the water consumption per head of the population amounted to thirteen gallons daily. To-day it is thirty-five gallons. (In Berlin it is about twenty-eight.) The traffic system of the old Moscow was the most backward in the world. The new city, with its close network of trams, its omnibuses and trolley-buses, and its fine underground, heads the cities of the world with an average of 550 journeys per year for each person. The first two years of its operation—the most difficult period—have seen the plan of the new Moscow more than 100 per cent materialised, which institutes a guarantee that the projects of the next eight years will in their turn find completion.

Yesterday and to-day

It is not so much the amazing rapidity with which houses, streets, and means of transport

are being, and will be, created that strikes one as being the most remarkable feature of the reconstruction: what is without parallel is that the work is invariably carried out in conformity with a thoughtful and well-defined plan, and that, while attending to specific needs, it has never overlooked the interests of the city as a whole, or even of the entire huge State. For the planning of the new Moscow provides that the population of the city shall not exceed 5,000,000, and even now is taking into consideration how the surplus is to be distributed. In America, the population of the largest city comprises 9 per cent of the entire nation, in France 12 per cent, in England more than 15 per cent. For many obvious reasons, the Soviet Union does not want the population of its capital to increase at random, and limits it from the outset to 2·5 per cent of the whole.

"Always serve the whole"

It is heartening to see, after the vague, empty promises of Fascist four-year plans, with what precision every detail is thought out here, and how prudently the ability to obtain or produce the necessary materials is estimated. What has been accomplished up to the moment has

Guarantee of completion

proved how accurately these estimates were made.

The official description of the " Plan for the Reconstruction of the City of Moscow " states:

A prophesy

" The execution of this plan requires that all available forces shall be exerted to the utmost; but it will be completed."

Certainty

Anyone who has been in Moscow knows that it will be completed.

The following provisions are contained in Articles 118 to 121 of Section 10 of the Constitution of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, which is headed: " The Fundamental Rights and Fundamental Duties of Citizens ":

From the Constitution

" Article 118. The citizens of the U.S.S.R. have the right to work, that is, the right to be allotted assured employment, with remuneration therefor, in accordance with its quality and quantity.

Some fundamental rights and fundamental duties of citizens

" The right to work is assured by the Socialist organisation of political economy, by the constant development of the productive forces of the Soviet community, by the obviation of the

possibility of economic crises, and by the elimination of unemployment.

"Article 119. The citizens of the U.S.S.R. have the right to leisure.

"The right to leisure is assured by the shortening of the working day of the huge majority of workers to seven hours, the fixing of a yearly holiday for manual and clerical workers without loss of pay, and by the close network of health homes, recreation hostels, and clubs placed at the disposal of employables.

"Article 120. The citizens of the U.S.S.R. have the right to material maintenance in their old age, in illness and incapacitation.

"This right is guaranteed by the wide development of social insurance of manual and clerical workers at the expense of the State, by free medical assistance for employables, by the many sanatoria at the disposal of the employables.

"Article 121. The citizens of the U.S.S.R. have the right to education.

"This right is ensured by the general compulsory elementary school education, by the fact that all education, including that provided by the universities, is free, by the system of State

scholarships for the huge majority of the students at the universities, by school instruction in the mother tongue, by the organisation of free technical, trade, and agricultural instruction for the employables in trades, Soviet economics, machinery and tractor work, and collective economics."

It will be seen that the difference between the usual constitutions of the democracies and the Constitution of the Soviet Union lies in the fact that while the former admittedly proclaim the rights and liberties of the citizens, they specify no means of substantiating them, whereas the Constitution of the Soviet Union stipulates the very physical conditions without which true democracy cannot exist, inasmuch as without assured economic independence the unhampered formation of opinion is impossible, while there is nothing so inimical to freedom as the fear of unemployment, fear for the future of children, and fear of a wretched old age.

What is new in the Soviet Constitution

It may be disputed whether all the 146 articles of the Soviet Constitution are operative, or whether some of them exist only on paper.

But it is indisputable that the four articles which I have quoted—and they seem to me to be the basis of practical democracy—are not just printed words, but do express realities. If you were to turn the city of Moscow upside-down you would discover hardly anything inconsonant with these articles.

Not paper, but reality

If one considers this fact in conjunction with what I have already described, it will be seen that for the moment the average citizen in countries outside the Soviet Union lives more comfortably than his counterpart within it. But his comfort is built on sand. Many people, too, are so conscious of the unutterable misery around them as to be unable to enjoy their own advantages. They are distressed by the realisation that this misery could be avoided by a more reasonable order of things. For the moment the average citizen of the Union lives without many of the comforts of his fellows in other countries, but he lives more contentedly, in deeper harmony with his lot, and more happily.

Once again the happiness of Soviet citizens

II

CONFORMISM AND INDIVIDUALISM

The 'indolence" of the citizen of Moscow

André Gide once came across a "Stakhanovist" worker—that is, a record-breaking worker—who, as Gide was told, "could do in five hours eight days' work, or perhaps it was in eight hours five days' work, I cannot remember exactly. I ventured to ask," continues Gide, "whether this does not rather mean that previously the man required eight days to do five hours' work," and he is surprised that his question is received coldly and that they preferred not to answer it. This leads Gide to comment upon the "indolence" of the people of Moscow. "Laziness would be too strong a word," he adds, as an objective observer. He maintains, moreover, that in a country in which all the workers really work, "Stakhanovism" would be unnecessary. And he

thinks that the people of the Soviet Union would become slack as soon as they were left to themselves, and that " Stakhanovism " was invented to spur them on: formerly, he says, there was the knout.

These observations of Gide's astonish me. I, for my own part, must say that it was, on the contrary, the very activity and industry of the people of Moscow which impressed me. They run through the streets with tense faces, hasten over the pedestrian crossings as soon as the green light appears, crowd into the metro stations, or jump on to trams and omnibuses, swarming like ants. In the factories I hardly saw a worker, male or female, look up when the unaccustomed visitor passed. All were completely engrossed in their work. While as for the people in more or less responsible positions, these hardly allow themselves time for sleeping or eating, and think nothing of calling someone away from the opera, or themselves being fetched, to discuss some sudden question, or of telephoning someone at three or four o'clock in the morning. I have never come across so many indefatigable, industrious people as in Moscow. On the other hand, I noticed with regret that

Industriousness

these people are beginning to feel the harmful effects of their overwork. They are, in fact, consumed by their work. Almost all of Moscow's citizens in responsible positions look older than their years. The American hustle which I failed to discover in New York and Chicago I found in Moscow.

An end should definitely be made of the polite fiction of Russian indolence. A nation which, twenty years ago, was almost suffocated by poverty, filth, and ignorance, has at its disposal to-day highly developed industries, a rationalised agricultural system, a large number of newly founded or completely rebuilt cities, and has completely eradicated its illiteracy. Is it conceivable that so much could have been achieved by people who are by nature indolent? Granted the Soviet Union was fortunate in finding leaders of exceptional talent, but if all the geniuses which humanity has produced in centuries had been concentrated in Moscow in these two decades, they would never have been able to win so gigantic an achievement from a people inherently lazy. Small wonder that as long as the peasants and workers were sweated by unscrupulous

Achievement

contractors and big landowners they found their work an insufferable burden, and endeavoured to evade it. But all this has changed now that they realise that they themselves are reaping the benefit of their work. André Gide is also surprised—and this time many others share his surprise—at the inequality of incomes in the Soviet Union. I myself am surprised at their surprise. To me it seems utterly reasonable that the Union should adhere to the Socialist principle of "each according to his achievement," so long as it is unable to put into practice the ideal of complete Communism—"each according to his needs." It appears to me that Socialism is concerned, not with the distribution of poverty, but with the distribution of wealth. But I cannot see how a distribution of wealth could be arrived at if those from whom much is expected are forced to lead a life of such meanness that it must prove injurious to their achievement. The idea that, so long as citizens in a Socialist State cannot all live well, they must all live meanly, or at any rate very modestly, seems to me an atavistic derivative of primitive Christian views, and more pious than reasonable. The supporters of this opinion

Distribution of wealth, not of poverty

remind me of one of my relations, an old Bavarian administrative official, who, during the Great War, slept on bare boards because outside in the trenches so many were without beds.

The fear that the inequality of income will cause a recrudescence of the classes so recently abolished seems to me irrelevant. The very basis of a society without class is undoubtedly that everyone should receive from birth the same educational and vocational opportunities, so that everyone is certain of being educated and employed according to his or her ability. That this principle is operative in the Soviet Union is not disputed even by its most severe critics. Nowhere in Moscow have I found servility. *Tovarich* is no empty word. Comrade Builder, coming up from the underground, really does feel himself the peer of Comrade People's Commissar. In the West, from what I have seen, the sons of the peasantry and proletariat who manage to secure a higher education are deeply conscious of their ascent into the upper classes, and endeavour to sever relations with their former comrades. In the Soviet Union, on the other hand, the peasant

A classless community

and proletarian intellectuals maintain a close contact with the manual workers from whom they sprang.

In one respect there does seem to me to be a division in the Soviet Union. The early history of the Union falls clearly into two epochs—first the fighting and then the rebuilding. Now, a good fighter is not necessarily a good worker, and the men who accomplished great things in the years of the Civil War were likely to be anything but adequate when it came to reconstruction. But naturally those to whom the Union owed so much for its very foundation thought their claims extended to posts of importance, and, just as naturally, the men who fought were drawn on for the rebuilding primarily, because they were dependable. But to-day the Civil War is past history, and the good fighters, whenever they proved to be bad workers, have been removed from their official posts, and many of them have naturally become opponents of the regime.

Two classes: fighters and workers

Successful as the execution of the Five Year Plans was on the whole, it was inevitable that

Wreckers

they should not be accomplished without friction, and mistakes were made in various quarters. Those who exerted themselves to the full and did good work are embittered by the feeling that they are being hampered by the poor or defective work of others. They are always ready to ascribe evil intentions to those who simply have not the ability to do better, and to cast suspicion upon them as "wreckers."

The truth

No one doubts that acts of sabotage did take place. Many who had been officers, manufacturers, or large farmers, but were now deposed, contrived to obtain important appointments and carried on sabotage. If to-day the supply of leather for private citizens, and of shoes in particular, is inadequate, it is without question the fault of these large farmers who, at the time, sabotaged cattle-breeding. The chemical industry and the transport services, too, suffered for a long time from acts of sabotage. If to-day there is an extremely strict supervision of factories and machines, it can be justified on very good grounds.

and invention

But gradually a real "wrecker" psychosis has grown up amongst the people. They have come to interpret everything that goes wrong as

sabotage, whilst most certainly a great part of the defects are traceable to incompetence pure and simple.

One day a high official was lunching with me at an hotel, and the waiter was serving too slowly. The official called for the manager, made a complaint, and said jokingly: "Surely that man is a wrecker?" But it is beyond a joke when the poor results obtained by a film director or an editor are interpreted as sabotage, or when poor illustrations in a book on the reconstruction of the national economy are attributed to the ill-will of the artist trying to discredit the reconstruction by his inferior work.

An example

That this psychosis was able to gain ground is a point in favour of that conformism with which many reproach the Soviet Union. It is held by such critics that the people of the Union are deprived of individuality, their mode of life and opinions standardised, subjected to the same laws, made uniform. According to Gide: "If one talks to one Russian, one talks with them all."

Conformism

There is an element of truth in such statements. Not only does the economic plan, so long as the production of manufactured articles remains under-developed, entail a certain degree of standardisation of consumer-goods, furniture, clothes, and small necessities, but the entire public life of the Soviet citizen is also extensively standardised. Meetings, political speeches, debates, and club evenings are all as alike as two peas, and political terminology never varies throughout the whole of this huge State.

How true is this?

Closer examination reveals that this notorious "conformism" can be reduced to three main features: uniformity of opinion in regard to the fundamental principles of Communism, common love of the Soviet Union, and the confidence shared by all that in the near future the Soviet Union will be the happiest and most powerful country on earth.

Three features

First of all, therefore, it is generally accepted that it is better for the means of production to be in the possession of the community and not of individuals. I cannot see that this conformism is so bad a thing. In fact, to put it baldly, it seems no worse than for everybody to agree that

if two quantities are equal to a third they are also equal to one another. Nor can I take offence at the Soviet people's love of their country, even though it is expressed in always the same, often very naïve, forms. Rather must I confess that their childlike patriotic vanity is rather pleasing to me than otherwise. A young nation has, with enormous sacrifices, accomplished something really great, and now stands before its achievement and cannot itself quite believe in it. It is overjoyed at what it has achieved, and is eager that the foreigner, too, should never cease to confirm how great and fine the achievement is.

Communism and Soviet patriotism

That this Soviet patriotism excludes all criticism is, moreover, by no means the truth. "Bolshevist self-criticism" is certainly no empty expression. One reads in the newspapers a succession of most bitter attacks on numerous real or imaginary grievances and on prominent individuals whose fault, allegedly, these grievances are; I was astonished at industrial meetings by the strength of the criticisms levelled at the managers of the industries; and I stood amazed before news posters which attacked or caricatured principals and

Bolshevist self-criticism

responsible people with positive savagery. And foreigners are not prohibited from expressing their honest opinions. I have already mentioned that not only did the national newspapers leave my articles uncensored, even when I deplored certain intolerances or excessive Stalin-worship, or when I demanded more light on the conduct of an important political trial; what is more, they took pains to reproduce as faithfully as possible in the translation every nuance of these very passages, negative as they were. The prominent national personalities whom I met were without exception more interested in criticism than in indiscriminating praise. They like to measure their own achievement with that of the West, and they measure correctly, often all too correctly, and when their own work falls short of that of the West they do not hesitate to admit it. Indeed, they often overrate Western achievements to their own disadvantage. But when a foreigner indulges in petty and inconsequent fault-finding, and loses sight of the value of the whole achievement in unimportant shortcomings, Soviet people quickly lose patience, while empty hypocritical compliments they

can never forgive. (Perhaps the violence of their reaction to Gide's book against the Soviet Union is explained by the fact that, within the Union, Gide had been able to find nothing but praise, and gave voice to his criticisms only outside its frontiers.)

Even if one reads and hears everywhere objections to details, one never hears criticism of the general principle of the Party. In this they "conform"; that is all right. In this there is no divergence, or, if there is, it dare not be expressed. But what is the general principle of the Party? That every measure adopted is derived from the conviction that the establishment of Socialism in the Soviet Union is fundamentally a success, and that defeat in the impending war is out of the question. In this aspect, too, I cannot see why conformism is so much to be deplored. Even if doubts as to whether this principle was justified might have had some foundation up to the middle of 1935, they have since been so completely dispelled by the growing prosperity of the nation and the strength of the Red Army that the consensus omnium on this point, too, means no more than a general deference to common sense.

General principle of the Party

onformism
n Moscow
and in
London

When all is said and done, the conformism of the Soviet people boils down to a general deep love for their homeland. Elsewhere this is simply called patriotism. When, for example, in England, a fierce scuffle at a football match changes to general harmony as soon as the National Anthem is played, this is rarely called conformism.

Love for
country,
utter, guns,
and gold

One difference there certainly is between the patriotism of the Soviet people and that of other countries. The patriotism of the Soviet Union has a more rational foundation. There the individual's standard of living is visibly improving daily. Not only is he receiving more roubles, but the purchasing power of these roubles is also increasing. In 1936 the Soviet worker's average wage had increased by 278 per cent compared with 1929, and the Soviet citizen enjoys the certainty that this tendency must continue for many years to come. (Not only because the gold reserves of Germany have fallen to £5 million and those of the Soviet Union risen to £1,400 million.) It is easier to be patriotic when the patriot gets more guns and more butter, too, than it is when he gets more guns and no more butter.

In itself, there is nothing remarkable in the unanimous optimism of the Soviet people. Indeed, the lack of variety in the words in which it is expressed quickly leads to banality. The Soviet people are only just being initiated into the elements of knowledge, and they have had no time to acquire adequately shaded terminology, so that their patriotism, too, is expressed on the whole in a very commonplace manner. Workers, officers of the Red Army, students, young peasant women, all assert in the same monotonous phrases how happy their life is, and revel in this optimism of theirs, whether talking or listening. But the authorities play their part in fostering this tendency. After a time this standardised enthusiasm, particularly with its official amplification, begins to sound forced. And this accounts for even critics who are kindly disposed ultimately talking of conformism.

Fostered optimism

This standardised optimism does incalculable harm to literature and the theatre, which might be the most important factors in the formation of personality.

Literature and the theatre

It is unfortunate, for conditions in the Soviet Union are extremely favourable to an efflo-

rescence of literature and drama. I have already
Good soil pointed out that this huge country, by making available to the majority of the population the things of the mind, brought to life a great mass of talent which had previously lain paralysed—talent for giving and for taking.

Savants, writers, artists, and actors enjoy definite advantages in the Soviet Union. They are appreciated, encouraged, and even pampered by the State, both with prestige and large incomes. All the means they require are placed at their disposal, and not one of them need suffer any anxiety as to whether what he is doing will pay. They have, moreover, the most responsive and eager public in the world.

It is difficult to form any conception of the Soviet people's hunger for reading. They read newspapers, periodicals, and books from cover to cover, without appeasing their appetites in the slightest. I met with a particularly forcible illustration of this when I was visiting the new printing works of the *Pravda*, the paper with the largest circulation in Moscow. We went round the gigantic rotary machine, perhaps the most efficient in existence; it prints two million copies in two hours. In shape, this machine

somewhat resembles the body of a gigantic locomotive, and one walks round its endless platform, eighty-five yards long, as if on the deck of a liner. When I had walked round for about a quarter of an hour, it struck me that the machine only occupied half the long hall where it was kept, the other half being empty. I asked the reason. " We are now printing the *Pravda*," I was informed, " in an edition of only two million, but we have a further five million subscriptions on hand, and, as soon as our paper factories can supply, we shall set up another machine."

Hunger for reading

The books of favourite authors, too, are printed in editions of a size which makes the foreign publisher gasp. Pushkin's works were circulated at the end of 1936 in over thirty-one million copies, and the books of Marx and Lenin in still larger editions. Only the shortage of paper limits the size of the editions of popular authors. On any ordinary day the books of such an author are unobtainable in any bookshop or library; if a new edition appears, buyers queue up, and the edition, even if it consists of as many as 20,000, 50,000, or 100,000 copies, is sold out within a few hours.

Book editions

In the lending libraries, of which there are 70,000, books by favourite authors have to be ordered weeks in advance. Although sold at very low prices, books are precious things, and I treated it as more than a joke when I was told that I could leave money lying about, but that my books should be kept under lock and key. Books by well-known authors are also translated into the many languages of the peoples of the Union, and an author is read by nations whose name he can scarcely pronounce.

Influence of the books

I have already mentioned that Soviet readers devote more time and more energy to books than readers in other countries, and that for them the people of the books attain a much higher degree of reality. The heroes of a novel have as real an existence in the Soviet Union as any personage of its public life. Once an author has gained the ear of the Soviet citizens, he will receive devotion as great as is accorded elsewhere only to film-stars or boxers, and the people trust in him like good Catholics in their father-confessor.

Philosophical books, too, excite greater interest there. A new 100,000-copy edition of Kant's works was sold out at once. They

wrangle as whole-heartedly over the theories of a dead philosopher as they do over a present-day economic problem which has practical significance for everyone, and over an historical personage as keenly as over the qualities of an officiating People's Commissar. Soviet citizens reject anything that has no bearing upon their own reality, but, once they find something that has, it becomes for them more intensively alive than it would anywhere else, and the conception of "The Heritage," which they like to use, is for them something completely tangible.

"The Heritage"

It is the same with the dramatic arts as with literature.

Dramatic arts

It is difficult, when one comes to speak of Moscow plays and films, to give an objective account and not to enthuse unduly over the performances or the audience. The Soviet people are the best, most conscientious, and boldest art directors and musicians in the world. Their renderings of their own composers —Tschaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, or the young Dchersinsky's *The Peaceful Don*—as well as of *Figaro* and *Carmen*, are completely satisfying musically, and, moreover, the production

and scenery are unprecedentedly new and alive. In other countries one finds an absence not only of talent, but, too, of the patience and money necessary for the creation of performances such as those of the Moscow Arts Theatre or the Vachtangov Theatre; for the perfection of the casting of each separate part and the brilliant team-work of the actors require months, often years, of rehearsal, and are only possible if the producer is not being urged on by the whip of a promoter with his eye on the financial result. The scenery attains a perfection which I have seen nowhere else, and the costumes, if the occasion demands—in opera or certain historical plays, for example—are extremely lavish. There was formerly a tendency to extravagance. This has disappeared, and there is greater moderation, although bold and interesting experiments are being made still. I saw at the Vachtangov Theatre a performance of *Much Ado About Nothing*. Every detail was light and gossamer and daring almost to impudence, while Shakespeare and jazz went well together. It also happens sometimes that the same play is given in Moscow at different theatres and in different styles. This

The theatre in Moscow

is done with *Othello*, *Romeo*, and plays and operas by contemporary dramatists. I saw a play by a young writer, Pogodin—called *The Aristocrats*, and about a convict settlement—in two Moscow theatres. The Vachtangov people gave an extraordinarily good performance, polished to the last detail, albeit rather traditional; Ochlopkov, on the other hand, presented it on two stages connected by a sort of bridge, one of the stages having been erected in the middle of his auditorium, and without scenery: everything constructively significant, exceedingly well worked out, highly experimental and effective.

Connoisseurs tell me that Leningrad's theatre is very little behind Moscow's, and, in fact, surpasses it in some respects. In the provinces fine large theatres have been erected, the last word in technical perfection, and the experienced, well-known teams of the capital are sent to these theatres, not only on short tours, but to stay. In the provinces

Even greater are the resources which are at the disposal of the cinema, and it is thus made possible for the film directors, too, to experiment without regard to expenses. How well

such pains and expenditure pay, I could judge from the finished or still uncompleted films of Reismann and Roschal, and above all from Eisenstein's fine and truly poetic film *Beschin Lug*, a masterpiece, full of deep and justifiable Soviet patriotic feeling.

Films

And the public is grateful. Moscow has thirty-eight large theatres, an immense number of club and amateur theatres and the like, and a number of new theatres are in course of construction. There are almost always full houses in these theatres, and it is not easy to obtain tickets. In the Arts Theatre, I am told, there has never been an empty seat since it was opened. The public sit before the stage or screen engrossed, enjoying every nuance, but still full of that naïvety which alone makes pure enjoyment of a work of art possible. This receptive public is critical and ingenuous at the same time; it " relishes " a subtle psychological nuance no less than a scenic *tour de force*. When the great actor Chmelov as the Tsar Fjodor in Alexei Constantinovitch Tolstoi's historical play of that name, good-natured and feeble, not knowing what he should do, instead of interrupting vigorously, made an almost imper-

The public's reaction

ceptible movement of his neck as if something was distressing him, a little uncertain smile on his lips, the old man who was sitting next to me sighed unhappily; he had understood immediately that the Tsar up there on the stage was smiling himself and his kingdom away. And when Othello, deceived by Iago, believed his story of Desdemona's *affaire* with Cassio, a soft, scornful laugh came from the young woman beside me; she ground her teeth a little and said distinctly: " Idiot." But when, in the last act of *Carmen*, the wall of the circus goes up and the bull-fight becomes visible to the expectant public, a deep, satisfied " Ah ! " of admiration passes through the two thousand five hundred listeners. The exasperation of the audience at Vischnevsky's film *We From Kronstadt*, when the White Guardsmen compel their chained prisoners to jump into the sea, and the depths to which they are affected when even the very young prisoner, fifteen years old, is drowned, must be seen to be believed.

It can be seen that Soviet writers and theatrical people have an ideal public, and enjoy, moreover, the support of the State to the fullest extent; and their work should be

for them an unsullied joy. But, unhappily, they are the very people who are injured most by that standardised optimism of which I have already spoken.

The other side

The artistic policy of the Soviet Union is manifestly not uniform. It opens its doors to all the older literature; Russian and foreign classics —"The Heritage"—are cherished; and it imposes one criterion only on contemporary writers of the West—quality. An excellent paper entitled *International Literature* is published in Moscow in Russian, German, English, and Chinese, and could hardly have a more profound appreciation of the task of reconciling Soviet with foreign literature. The German classics' dream of a "universal literature" and a "Republic of Letters" is nowhere brought closer to materialisation than in the Soviet Union.

Tolerance

This tolerance makes all the more surprising the extension of the policy of the economic plan to contemporary Soviet authors. Admittedly, those Soviet writers who diverge from the "General Principle" are not completely suppressed, but preference is clearly given to those who strike the note of heroic optimism in all

The economic plan in art

their works as frequently and as unmistakably as possible.

There is to-day an heroic flavour in Soviet life which can carry the artist with it. The threat of war coming from the Fascist Powers has affected the mentality of the authors and artists to such an extent that this same heroic optimism recurs as the *leit-motiv* of many of their works. But I cannot think that the presentation of heroic subjects in books, on the stage, and on the screen would occupy so very much space, were it not fostered in high places by all possible means. Certainly the writer who ventures to deviate from the general principle does not have an easy time. For example, a great lyric poet, whose prevailing mood is autumnal melancholy, or at any rate not at all heroically optimistic, continues to be printed, read, and loved, but he is no longer mentioned in the Press and he receives no more publicity. Fear of the forbidden defeatism often manifests itself in the most childish ways amongst those who supervise the means of production. A story, for example, written by a well-known author, telling how an airman establishes a record and then crashes, was omitted from a

Heroic optimism in the books

collection of the author's stories by the over-anxious editor as being " too pessimistic."

The effort not to deviate from the general principle of heroic optimism is more noticeable on the stage even than in literature, and strongest of all in the film world. There the political control offices never cease to intervene in the production and to try to divert the political trends of the works into the proper channels at the expense of their artistic quality, giving them an emphasis which often leads to coarseness. There can be no doubt that heroic optimism has produced a certain number of excellent works—Vischnevsky's *Optimistic Tragedy*, for example, and his film *We From Kronstadt*, or Afinogenov's play *Distance*, or the opera of young Dchersinsky which I have already mentioned, *The Peaceful Don*. Here the political trend, while it is obviously there, has not a disturbing effect, although, perhaps, *The Peaceful Don* would have gained if at the conclusion the red flag had waved only once instead of twice. But in other works, film and stage, the artistic effect is frequently prejudiced by over-insistence on the political trend. The play *Intervention*, for example, or the film *The*

On the stage

Last Night, admittedly attain the highest technical perfection, but the crude black-and-white presentation of the characters strains one's sympathy.

You may wonder, perhaps, how I can venture to express such positive opinions after having confessed to an inadequate knowledge of the language. This is an occasion to sing the praises of Russian interpreters. In Moscow they are accustomed to foreigners being unable to speak the language, and interpreters of amazing understanding are at one's disposal. They sit beside you at the theatre or during a lecture and whisper a verbatim translation into your ear, in such a way that you can still hear the Russian words and have, as it were, a living libretto beside you. They do all this with such remarkable tact that you almost lose sight of your regrettable lack of direct understanding.

Interpreters

To return to what I was saying, serious contemporary plays or films are, if they treat of other than political subjects, rarely presented, which makes the repertoire of the Soviet theatre and cinema meagre. An extraordinarily good opera was turned down because its

"And art made tongue-tied by authority"

book did not conform to the Principle. Only classics are left for those theatres which do not want to give heroically optimistic plays. The producers certainly go to the classics. During the time when I was in Moscow no less than eight of Shakespeare's plays were given, and one could also see Beaumarchais, Schiller, Ostrovski, Gogol, Tolstoi, Gorki, and Gozzi on the Moscow stage, and a really good adaptation of a Dickens novel—all exceptionally fine performances. The best the film directors who do not wish to put heroic optimism on the screen can do is to make comedies and farces. "An author," I was told in Moscow, "who wants to get a non-political play produced, must, if his name is not Gorki, have been dead for at least fifty years." There was a trace of bitterness about the joke. In fact, the effect of the Soviet Union's artistic policy is to make the production in Moscow better than the play. The Soviet Union has a fine theatre, but no drama.

This has not always been the case; previously there was certainly a greater range of material to be seen on the Moscow stage and screen. If one asks responsible people why during the last

year or two literary and artistic production has been more strictly controlled than previously, one receives the reply that the Soviet Union is under the shadow of an immediately imminent war, and that moral preparation ought not to be neglected. This is a reply which one receives in the Union to many other questions, and it explains a number of things which are difficult to understand outside its borders.

Causes of stricter censorship

But in my opinion it does not adequately explain why the artists should be tied to the State's apron-strings. The State may perhaps set the artist tasks, but I cannot think it wise for the artist to be compelled by more or less gentle pressure to accept these tasks and to observe punctually the General Principle. I am convinced that the artist best fulfils those tasks which he sets himself. Moreover, the citizens of the Union are so soaked with politics that this quality would find expression in the works of the artists even if they were not harassed into the choice of directly political material.

Is censorship necessary?

III

DEMOCRACY AND DICTATORSHIP

Freedom? Democracy?

AND NOW WE APPROACH what is the most controversial problem arising from discussions of the Moscow of 1937. How is "freedom" faring in the Soviet Union?

When one talks with Soviet people on the subject they maintain that they alone possess effective democracy and that it exists in the so-called democratic countries in form only. And they ask how, if democracy means government by the people, the people can exercise this government if they are not in possession of the means of production. In the so-called democratic countries, they assert, the people are rulers in name only and not in fact; the power is actually in the hands of those who have control of the means of production. To what, they ask again, is this so-called democratic

Theoretical and practical democracy

freedom reduced if one examines it more closely? It is confined to the freedom of railing with impunity against the Government and the opposing political parties, and being able, once in every three or four years, to throw a little piece of paper into a ballot-box without being spied upon. But nowhere do these "liberties" afford a guarantee or even a possibility that the will of the majority will really be carried out. What can be done with freedom of opinion, of the Press, of meetings, if one has no control over the Press, printing works, and meeting halls? And in what country have the people control over those things? Where can the people express their opinions *effectively*, and where find *effective* representation? The constitution of Weimar is supposed to be the freest in the world. Has the Parliament, which was chosen in accordance with the constitutional right to electoral franchise, been able to enforce the manifest will of the people? Has the Parliament been able to prevent the dictatorship of the Fascist minority? And, the Soviet people conclude, all so-called democratic liberties will remain fictitious so long as they are not founded upon the true freedom of the people, which

can only exist when the means of production are under the control of the community.

"You know," a leading statesman of the Union said to me, "the ruling politicians of the bourgeois democracies realised just as soon as we did that, in face of the threat of war from the Fascist States, the only policy which could succeed was that of counter-armament. But since they had to consider elections, Parliaments, and an artificially formed public opinion, they had to hide the truth they saw, or at best express it covertly and guardedly. In various roundabout ways they had to bully and coax what was required out of their public opinion and their Parliaments. If *we* had not been here, if we had not armed, the Fascist war would have broken out long ago.

Disadvantages of the parliamentary system

The activity of the democracies' Parliaments has, for the most part, been confined to making life burdensome for the people in power and preventing them from taking the steps that were necessary, or at any rate making this difficult for them. The net result of this so-called democratic parliamentary system, with its so-called democratic freedom of the Press, is that anyone who is in the public eye has either

to put up with having mud flung at him continually or to risk his life in refuting meaningless insults. Instead of doing really constructive work, the Ministers of a parliamentary State have to spend the greater part of their time replying to irrelevant questions and in the *reductio ad absurdum* of ridiculous objections."

I must confess that this picture seems to me more than a mere caricature. I myself have held democratic liberties dear for most of my life, and freedom of opinion and of the Press was to me, as an author, very precious. The famous dictum of Anatole France—that democracy consists in the rich having the same right as the poor to sleep under the arches of the Seine—seemed to me an exaggerated aphorism, as charming as it was ridiculous. This democratic conviction of mine received its first blow during the war, when I was made to realise that, despite all democracy, war was continued against the will of the majority of the people. In the years after the war, the gaps in the usual democratic constitutions became more and more evident to me, and to-day I incline towards the opinion that civil liberties

Prestige of authors

are more or less a decoy to enable the will of a small minority to be carried out.

As for the Soviet Union, it has, I am convinced, gone far along the path towards Socialist democracy. It is an actual fact that there the people and not individuals are in possession of the means of production, and it is a fact, too, that whilst the democratic nations, by their empty talk of disarmament and their continual compromise, were encouraging the Fascist States to commit more and more acts of violence, the Soviet Union alone, with its systematic armament, was preventing Fascism from beginning its war against an inadequately armed world. Not only, then, are the leaders of the Soviet Union right when they emphasise with a certain irony that only their "undemocratic measures" have made the continued existence of the West European democracies possible; they have, moreover, created a real democracy, in that they have transferred the ownership of the means of production to the community and forged effective arms for the safeguarding of this condition.

Towards Socialist democracy

Opponents of the Soviet Union like to hurl

at one's head Lenin's dictum: "Freedom is a bourgeois prejudice." They are quoting incorrectly. In actual fact the sentence asserts exactly the opposite of what they have read into it. It comes from the treatise *Fallacies about Freedom*, and Lenin speaks there of the "irreverent unmasking of the democratic prejudices of the petite bourgeoisie as regards liberty and equality." "So long as classes are not abolished," he says, "all talk of liberty and equality is self-deception. So long as the question of the ownership of the means of production remains unsolved, there can be no possibility of any real liberty of human individuality, nor of a real equality of mankind, but only of a class freedom of the proprietors, of a hypocritical equality of the haves and have-nots, of the satisfied and the hungry, of the exploiter and the exploited."

"Freedom a bourgeois prejudice"

This conception of freedom has become an axiom for the Soviet citizen. The liberty to rail publicly against the Government may be a good liberty, but he thinks it a much better liberty to be free from the fear of unemployment, or of a needy old age, or anxiety as to the future of his children.

The good liberty and the better

Stalin and liberty

Stalin gave such thoughts popular expression in a speech on Stakhanov workers. "Unfortunately," he said, "the matter does not by any means end with liberty. If there is a shortage of bread, if there is a shortage of butter and fat, if there is a shortage of clothing materials, if the housing conditions are bad, then nothing much can be done with freedom alone. It is very difficult, comrades, to live on freedom alone. In order to live well and happily, the good things of political freedom must be supplemented by material ones."

Fritz Mauthner and freedom

At this point, I cannot resist quoting the sceptical remarks of the far too little known philosopher, Fritz Mauthner, on the conception of democratic freedom. "A democratic State," he says, "is a State whose citizens are politically free. Only it is decided by bygone days, or according to any new superstition, how the laws are to come into being: by the decisions of the richest, of the oldest, of the longest established, or even of the majority. It is nowhere expressly provided: political liberty consists in the laws which all must obey being made by the stupid. Political liberty is achieved normally through a revolution, that is, by a denial

of the legal restraints. Since, however, such a denial is a Utopia—an order of society without legal restraints is unthinkable—it is, then, the first task of the new order of society to deny the denial and to establish new restraints, which are then in their turn called liberty."

To return to the Soviet Union. The Constitution of the Soviet Union provides in Article 125: "In conformity with the interests of the employables, and in order to consolidate the Socialist system, citizens are guaranteed by law: (*a*) Freedom of speech; (*b*) Freedom of the Press; (*c*) Freedom to assemble and hold meetings; (*d*) Freedom of street processions and demonstrations. These rights of the citizen are guaranteed by the fact that the printing works, paper supplies, public buildings, streets, postal and telegraphic services, and other material conditions necessary to enforce such rights, are placed at the disposal of the employables and their organisations." This article sounds very reassuring; it is not content, like corresponding articles in other constitutions, to guarantee freedom of speech and of the Press; it also specifies what secures the guarantee. Nevertheless, practice proves that despite this

Freedom of opinion and of the Press in the Soviet Union

security the position in regard to freedom of speech and of the Press in the Soviet Union is by no means ideal. As I have already shown, many writers have cause to sigh on account of the over-solicitousness of the political authorities, and the fact that Plato wanted to banish poets from his State is but poor consolation for those affected.

However much I regret that Article 125 of the Soviet Constitution is not for the moment completely effective, I can, on the other hand, understand that the Soviet Union does not wish to traverse precipitately the little that is left of the way which still separates it from the consummation of the Socialist State. The Soviet Union would never have been able to achieve what it has achieved if it had indulged in a parliamentary democracy according to the West European conception. The establishment of Socialism would never have been possible with an unrestricted right to abuse. No Government, constantly attacked in Parliament and in the Press and dependent on the result of elections, could ever have been able to impose on the population the hardships which alone made this establishment possible,

Establishment of the Socialist State and right to abuse

and, faced with the alternative either of using up a very great part of their strength in parrying foolish and malicious attacks, or of bending the whole of this strength to the completion of the structure, the leaders of the Union decided to restrict the right to abuse.

But carping, whining, and alarming are pursuits which many hold almost as dear as life itself. Every language contains a host of words for them, and I can well imagine that to many the restriction of the right to abuse must seem sheer despotism. For this reason many people say that the Soviet Union is the very opposite of a democracy, and some, indeed, go so far as to maintain that there is no difference between the Union and the Fascist dictatorships. Their blindness is to be pitied. At bottom, the Soviet dictatorship is confined to prohibiting the propagation of two opinions in word, deed, or writing: firstly, that the establishment of Socialism in the Union is impossible without a world revolution; and, secondly, that the Soviet Union is bound to lose the coming war. It seems to me that anyone who deduces from these two prohibitions complete homogeneousness with the Fascist dictatorships is overlooking

"And that is called democracy"

one essential difference, which is that the Soviet Union forbids agitation in support of the principle that twice two is five, whilst the Fascist dictatorships forbid active pursuit of the principle that twice two is four.

Victory first, then the buttons on the uniforms

But, seriously, the Soviet people would, of course, like to be free of the blemishes which have so far been present in their public life. That this is their wish, they have proved by their acceptance of their Constitution, and by the jubilation with which they accepted it. But they are cautious people, shrewd and methodical, and, just as they saw to increasing the production of consumer-goods only after they had made good their deficiency in raw materials and machinery, in the same way, they wish to install the individual into the full enjoyment of the rights of Socialist democracy only when they have made the stability of this democracy certain either by victory or by eliminating the danger of war. "No, comrade," one of the leaders of the Union said to me when we were discussing the blemishes which still disfigure the Socialist democracy, "we are a battalion on the march. First we must conquer, and then we can consider whether the buttons

on our uniforms would be better a little higher or a little lower."

Talking of the same thing, a Soviet philologist said to me jokingly: "What more can you want? Democracy is government by the people; dictatorship, government by an individual. But if this individual represents the people as ideally as is the case with us here, do not democracy and dictatorship become one and the same thing?"

There is a serious side to this comment. Stalin-worship, the immoderate cult which the population makes of Stalin, is one of the first things that strike a foreigner visiting the Soviet Union. All over the country, in suitable and unsuitable places, one comes across gigantic busts and portraits of Stalin. Any speeches which one may have the opportunity of hearing, not only political, but also lectures on any artistic and scientific subject, are interlarded with glorifications of Stalin, and frequently the idolisation of the man assumes unattractive forms.

Stalin-worship

Here are some of them. The busts which one finds in the various rooms of the Architectural Exhibition which I have already

Examples

praised are not entirely meaningless, since Stalin himself is one of the fathers of the project for the complete reconstruction of Moscow. But it is quite impossible to see what the gigantic, ugly bust of Stalin is doing in the Moscow Rembrandt Exhibition, which is otherwise most tastefully arranged. And I was taken aback when, at a lecture on "The Technique of Soviet Drama," I heard the otherwise very intelligent and restrained speaker suddenly burst into a tremendous song of praise on the merits of Stalin.

There can be no question that in the great majority of cases this idolatry is genuine. The Causes people feel the need to express their gratitude, their infinite admiration. They do in truth believe that they owe to Stalin all they are and have, and, however incongruous and at times distasteful this Stalin-worship may seem to us of the West, nowhere have I found anything to indicate that it is in the least artificial or ready-made. Rather it has grown up organically, side by side with the results achieved in the economic reconstruction. The people are grateful to Stalin for their bread and meat, their order, their education, and for the creation

of the Red Army to safeguard their new well-being. They must be able to show gratitude to someone for the manifest improvement in conditions, and no mere abstraction will suffice; they are not grateful to an abstract "Communism," but to a tangible man, which is Stalin. The Russian is inclined to exuberance in his speech and his gestures, and he is glad to have an opportunity of pouring out his heart. This excessive homage is perhaps intended not so much for Stalin, the individual, as for the representative of this visibly successful economic construction. When the people say, "Stalin," they have in the back of their minds increasing prosperity and increasing culture. When the people say, "We love Stalin," it is because this is the simplest and most natural form of expression they can give to their willing acceptance of their economic circumstances, of Socialism, and of the regime.

Moreover, Stalin is flesh of the people's flesh. He is the son of a peasant cobbler, and has preserved his kinship with the workers and peasants. Of him, it can be said more truly than of any other statesman I know, that he

speaks the people's language. He is definitely not what one would call a great orator. He speaks hesitatingly, not at all brilliantly, and rather tonelessly, as if he found it difficult. His arguments come slowly: they appeal to the sound common sense of people who grasp a thing thoroughly, but not quickly. But, above all, Stalin has a sense of humour, a circumstantial, sly, comfortable, often cruel peasant's sense of humour. In his speeches he likes to quote humorous anecdotes from popular Russian writers; he thoroughly enjoys these anecdotes, and points out the practical application.

Stalin one of the people

In parts, his speeches read like old-fashioned calendar inscriptions. When Stalin speaks with his knowing, comfortable smile, pointing with his forefinger, he does not, like other orators, make a breach between himself and his audience; he does not stand commandingly on the platform while they sit below him, but very soon an alliance, an intimacy is established between him and his listeners. They, being made of the same stuff, are susceptible to the arguments, and both laugh merrily at the same simple stories.

I cannot resist giving an example of the

popular style of Stalin's eloquence. He is speaking perhaps to the Constitution and making fun of the German semi-official correspondence, which asserts that the Constitution of the Soviet Union cannot be recognised as a real Constitution, since the Soviet Union is nothing more than a geographical idea.

Technique of his oratory

" How," Stalin asks, " can one come to an understanding with such ' critics ' ? " And he gives the good-humoured assembly a parable: " In one of his fables, the great Russian writer Chtchedrin describes a high administrative official who was as narrow-minded and simple as he was conceited and stubborn. One day this official sighted, on the far horizon, America, a not very important country, which, however, was governed in a remarkable manner, and where there were certain liberties which inflamed the people, and so the administrative official, having sighted America, became annoyed. What country is that ? Where has it sprung up from ? By what right does it exist ? Oh, it was discovered by chance some centuries ago, was it ? Cannot the place be covered up again, so that there is no longer

The administrative official and America

anything there? So thinks our administrative official, and he issues the order: 'America is to be covered up again.'"

"It seems to me," says Stalin to the assembly, "that the 'critic' of the 'semi-official German correspondence' and the administrative officer are as alike as two peas. The Soviet Union has been a thorn in his side for a long time. For nineteen years it has stood here like a lighthouse, infecting the workers of the whole world with the spirit of emancipation, and arousing the ire of the enemies of the working classes. And it turns out that this Soviet Union is not simply there, but is even growing, and not only growing, but even thriving, and not only thriving, but even presenting itself with a new Constitution—a Constitution which is stimulating minds and infusing new hope into the oppressed classes. How, then, can the critic of the 'semi-official German correspondence' be other than indignant? What country is this? he storms. By what right does it exist? And if it was discovered in October 1917, why can it not be covered up again, so that there is nothing more of it there? That is what he thinks, and he issues the decree: 'The Soviet

Union is to be covered up again; I declare in due and proper form that the Soviet Union no longer exists as a State, but is nothing more than a geographical idea.'

"Nevertheless, for all his foolishness, Chtchedrin's administrative official, after having issued his decree that America is to be covered up again, musters enough sense of reality to add to himself: 'Still, that, I think, is not my concern.' I do not know whether the critic of the 'semi-official German correspondence' is intelligent enough to conclude in his turn that he can indeed 'cover up' this or that State on paper, but that when it comes to the point 'that is not his concern.'"

Disobedient reality

That, then, is how Stalin speaks to his people. It can be seen that his speeches are circumstantial and somewhat elementary; but you must speak very loudly and clearly in Moscow if you want to be understood as far as Vladivostok. So Stalin speaks loudly and clearly, and everyone understands his words and enjoys them, and his speeches establish a feeling of kinship between the people who hear them and the man who makes them.

One must speak loud in Moscow if one wants to be heard in Vladivostok

Apart from this, Stalin is, in contrast to other

rulers, more than usually reserved. He has assumed no great title, but is simply called "Secretary of the Central Committee." He only shows himself in public when it is absolutely necessary. For instance, he stayed away from the great demonstration which Moscow held in Red Square to celebrate the acceptance of the Constitution which is popularly called after him. Hardly anything of his private life reaches the ears of the public. Hundreds of anecdotes are told about him, proving how much he has the lot of each individual at heart, how he will send an aeroplane to Central Asia with medicaments in order to save a child which otherwise would have been lost, or how he will almost force a particularly fine and spacious dwelling on to a too shy and retiring writer. Yet such anecdotes pass from mouth to mouth, and it is only in exceptional cases that a newspaper can publish them. Of Stalin's private life, his family, his habits, practically nothing definite is known. He will not allow public celebration of his birthday, and, if homage is paid to him in public, he emphasises that such homage applies exclusively to his policy, not to him personally. When, for in-

A politician not a private individual

stance, the Congress had carried the acceptance of the Constitution proposed and, in the end, edited by him, and gave him an uproarious ovation, he himself joined in the applause to show that he did not accept this homage as arising from appreciation of him personally, but solely of his policy.

It is manifestly irksome to Stalin to be idolised as he is, and from time to time he makes fun of it. The story goes that at a little dinner which he gave on New Year's Day to a circle of intimate friends, he raised his glass and said: "I drink to the health of the incomparable leader of the peoples, of the great genius Comrade Stalin. There, friends; and that is the last time I shall be toasted here this year." A toas among friends

Of all the men I know who have power, Stalin is the most unpretentious. I spoke frankly to him about the vulgar and excessive cult made of him, and he replied with equal candour. He grudged, he said, the time which he had to spend in a representative capacity, and that is easy to believe, for Stalin is, as many well-documented examples have proved to me, prodigiously industrious and attentive to every Frankness and objectivity

detail, so that he really has no time for the stuff and nonsense of superfluous compliments and adoration. On an average, he allows to be answered no more than one of every hundred telegrams of homage which he receives. He himself is extremely objective, almost to the point of incivility, and welcomes a like objectivity from the person he is talking to.

He shrugs his shoulders at the vulgarity of the immoderate worship of his person. He excuses his peasants and workers on the grounds that they have had too much to do to be able to acquire good taste as well, and laughs a little at the hundreds of thousands of enormously enlarged portraits of a man with a moustache which dance before his eyes at demonstrations. I pointed out to him that in the end even men of unimpeachable taste have set up busts and portraits of him, of more than doubtful artistic merit, in places to which they do not belong, as, for example, the Rembrandt Exhibition. Here he became serious. He supposed that there lay behind such extravagances the zeal of men who had only lately espoused the regime and were now doing everything within their power to prove their loyalty. He thinks it is possible

One hundred thousand men with moustaches

even that the " wreckers " may be behind it in an attempt to discredit him. " A servile fool," he said irritably, " does more harm than a hundred enemies." If he tolerates all the cheering, he explained, it is because he knows the naïve joy the uproar of the festivities affords those who organise them, and is conscious that it is not intended for him personally, but for the representative of the principle that the establishment of Socialist economy in the Soviet Union is more important than the permanent revolution.

Party resolutions

Moreover, in the meantime, the Party Committees in Moscow and in Leningrad have adopted resolutions in which they strongly condemn " the misguided practice of unnecessary and meaningless salutation of the Party leaders," and the gushing telegrams of homage have disappeared from the newspapers.

The ultimate goal

After all, the new Constitution which Stalin gave to the Soviet Union is not to be airily dismissed with a shrug of the shoulders as mere playing to the gallery. Although the methods which he and his helpers have employed have been frequently obscure—cunning was as

indispensable in their great struggle as valour—Stalin is honest when he describes the realisation of the Socialist democracy as his ultimate goal.

IV

NATIONALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

"RESTRICTION of any kind whatever, whether direct or indirect, of the rights of citizens, or, conversely, any definition of direct or indirect privileges of citizens on the grounds of their race or nationality, as also any dissemination of racial or national exclusiveness or of racial or national hatred, is punishable by law" —so reads Article 123 of the Soviet Constitution.

An article of the Constitution

Chapter II of the Constitution, headed, "The Building-up of the State," enumerates a bewildering profusion of nations, and when one sees in a Moscow congress the mass of different heads, from Georgia, Turcomania, Usbeck, Kirghiz, Tatchick, Kalmuck, Yakut, one realises what a huge task it must have been to unite them all under the sign of the Hammer and Sickle. And it was some time before the Union

The nationality problem

settled the nationality problem. But now it has been definitively adjusted, and the Union has proved that it is possible to combine nationalism and internationalism.

When, in the year 1924, Stalin recognised and proclaimed that the Russian peasant had within him the possibility of Socialism—that he could, in other words, be national and international at the same time—his opponents laughed at him and decried him as a Utopian. To-day practice has proved Stalin's theory to be correct: the peasant has been socialised from White Russia to the Far East. The Soviet people's love of their country is not less than the Fascists', but it is a love of the *Soviet* country—that is to say, it is not based merely on a mystical subconsciousness, but is consolidated with the good cement of reason. Stalin, the great practical psychologist, has worked the miracle of mobilising the patriotism of many peoples for the ends of international Socialism. To-day it really is a fact that distant Siberian settlements regard the attack of Germany and Italy on the Spanish Republic with an indignation as strong as if they themselves were threatened. In every house of the Union hangs

Solution

a map of Spain, and I have known peasants in the vicinity of Moscow to leave their work or their food in order to go to a meeting-house where they could hear the radio announcements on the events in that country. Even amongst the villagers it has proved possible, despite all their nationalism, to arouse a feeling of international fellowship.

"National in form, international in fact"

Stalin's formula, "National in form, international in fact," has to-day been translated into reality. The same Socialism is rendered by the many languages of the Union in many forms, national in expression, international in substance. Affectionately the national peculiarities of the autonomous republics are fostered—language, art, folklore of every kind. Nations which hitherto knew only the spoken word have been given writing and an alphabet. Everywhere national museums have been founded, institutes for the scientific study of national traditions, and national opera-houses and theatres of a high standard. I have witnessed the enthusiasm with which the people of Moscow, although thoroughly spoilt as theatre-goers, received the Georgian opera when it visited their Grand Theatre.

How sound and effective the nationality policy of the Union is, I have best been able to see from the way it is solving the ancient, vexatious, and apparently unsolvable Jewish question. The Tsarist Minister Pleve, in his own words, could think of no other way than to compel one-third of the Jews to become converted, one-third to emigrate, and one-third to die. The Union knew another way. It has assimilated the greater part of its five million Jews, and it has placed at the disposal of the remainder a vast autonomous territory and the means for its colonisation, thereby creating for itself several millions of active and intelligent citizens, fanatically devoted to the regime.

Solution of the Jewish question

I met all sorts of Jews in the Soviet Union, and, being interested in Jewish questions, I discussed matters with them exhaustively. The amazing *tempo* of production calls for men, hands, and brains; the Jews willingly submitted to the yoke, and thus the assimilation made further progress there than anywhere else, and I met Jews who said to me: "For many years I have never given a thought to the fact that I am a Jew; it was only your questions which reminded me of it again." I was moved

Jewish co-operation

by the unanimity with which the Jews I came across emphasised how completely they felt in harmony with the new State. Formerly they had been despised, persecuted, people without a calling, whose life had no meaning, mere " shadows " ; now they were peasants, workers, intellectuals, soldiers, all deeply grateful for the new order.

Jewish peasants

It is remarkable how eagerly these Jews who have for so long been kept away from the land threw themselves into the new vocation which was opened to them. On several occasions delegates from Jewish collective farms came to me with invitations to visit their settlements. I was more interested to hear what non-Jewish Soviet peasants had to say about these *kolchosen*; I assumed that anti-Semitism must manifest itself here if anywhere. And it transpired that originally these non-Jewish Soviet peasants had indeed been imbued with superstitious notions as to the nature of Jews, and that they had considered them to be totally unsuited for farming, above all things. Now they had only a good-humoured laugh for their earlier prejudices. I was told of big friendly contests between non-Jewish and Jewish settlements

in the Ukraine, in the Crimea, and in the region of the Don. Don Cossacks told me that it was not the fact that the Jews had beaten them in an agricultural competition which had overcome their former mistrust, but that the Jews had proved themselves to be the better riders.

No less whole-heartedly did the Jews, who for centuries had suffered the torments of exclusion from education and knowledge, now fling themselves into these new provinces. I was told that in Jewish villages there is a surprising absence of people between the ages of about fifteen and thirty—of young women as well as men. The explanation lies in the fact that the whole of the Jewish youth goes to the towns to study.

Intelligence of the Jewish youth

If the agricultural development favours the assimilation of Soviet Jews, the Union has, on the other hand, finally dispelled Lenin's theory of "the pernicious illusion of Jewish nationality" and made it possible for its Jews to retain this nationality.

"The pernicious illusion of Jewish nationality"

The nationalism of Soviet Jews expresses itself in a kind of sober enthusiasm. Two facts illustrate how unromantic, practical, and

courageous it is. Firstly, as his language the Soviet Jew recognises not the noble Hebrew, saturated with tradition, but not very appropriate to his needs, but the Yiddish which has grown up out of everyday life and, albeit a mixture of heterogeneous elements, has been well tried as a practical colloquial language by at least five million people. And, secondly, there is the territory which was offered to the Jews for the establishment of their national State, and where they have settled—a region remote and difficult, but of unlimited possibilities.

Jewish nationalism in the Soviet Union

Yiddish, like all national languages, is carefully fostered in the Union. There are Yiddish schools and Yiddish newspapers; there is a Yiddish literature of considerable standing. Congresses are called for the cultivation of the language, and Yiddish theatres enjoy the highest prestige. I saw in the Yiddish State Theatre at Moscow an extraordinarily good performance of *King Lear*, with that great actor Michoels in the title part, and a splendid fool in Suskins. The sets were fine and original, and the whole production excellently staged.

The Yiddish language

The establishment of the national Jewish State of Birobidchan at first encountered almost

The Jewish State of Birobidchan a Utopia

insuperable difficulties, and the project was regarded by the opponents of the Union, and not by them alone, as as rash and hopeless an undertaking as the establishment of the Socialist economic system in any one country. Inadequate financial resources made the execution of the project more difficult; many of the settlers tramped back, and its opponents were already saying triumphantly that the Utopian plan, as they predicted from the beginning would be the case, had foundered on the remoteness of the territory, the geological composition of its soil, the plague of mosquitoes and malaria, and not least the inadequacy of the degenerate provincial Russian Jews as pioneers.

And now to-day in the Birobidchan territory one sees a proper town with schools, hospitals, Government buildings, and a theatre, and one can travel from Moscow in the through coach of an express. Although the plan provides for the immigration of more than one hundred thousand Jews over the next three years, the authorities have to maintain strict supervision, so numerous are those willing to immigrate. I received many letters from Birobidchan, and

The Jewish State of Birobidchan a reality

I spoke to a good number of people who came from there direct. That the life there is still hard, no one denies. But no one denies any longer that the most difficult part is accomplished and that the alleged Utopia has become reality. The Jewish Socialist Republic of Birobidchan exists. It stands firmly, although its geological structure permits of this as little as the eternal laws of national economy permit of the establishment of the Socialist economic system in any one country.

V

WAR AND PEACE

ALL OVER THE WORLD there is talk of the coming war, and the question, "When do you think the war will break out?" constitutes a favourite topic of conversation. But although everybody is playing with the idea of the future war, no one in the West, apart from the inhabitants of the Fascist States, takes it entirely seriously, just as one goes on living and making arrangements without taking seriously into account one's own death, although it is a certainty. In the Soviet Union, however, everyone reckons with the imminent war as with a hundred per cent certainty. Our very existence, say the Soviet people, flourishing more and more from day to day, is so evident a refutation of all Fascist theories that the Fascist States, if they themselves would survive, must destroy us. Just as those who had been living

Will war break out tomorrow?

by carrying on their crafts with primitive tools, feeling themselves threatened by machinery, banded together and senselessly stormed the machines, so will the Fascist States in the end hurl themselves against us. And although the leaders know well enough that a war against us will most certainly result in their own destruction, they must make this war nevertheless. The economic difficulties which they have created for themselves will in the end force them to it. A Government cannot, as, for example, the German Government does, deprive its people of butter and fat, and more and more of its foodstuffs, and more and more daily necessities, with the promise that the guns they will forge in their place will restore all those things in abundance, and then keep these guns as mere show pieces.

It is not easy to describe the mental picture which an average Soviet citizen forms of the Fascists. He imagines Hitler's, Mussolini's, and Franco's subjects as some sort of primitive people, savages, provided certainly with the most modern technical arms, but having no conception of the elements of civilisation. He thinks that the Fascist, on the contrary, sees in

"A true German can never be an intellectual"

civilisation his most dangerous enemy and plans to exterminate the Soviet citizen as the exponent of this enemy civilisation. One amongst the epigrams of the German Fascists has struck the Soviet people with particular force: it appears in an official German calendar, and has taken not only Germany, but also the whole of the East by storm. It runs: " A true German can never be an intellectual." And since to be an intellectual constitutes the goal of the aspirations of every one of the Soviet people, peasant, worker and soldier, they necessarily see in the German Fascist the embodiment of the hostile principle. They feel towards him not exactly hatred, but rather the repulsion one feels for an unpleasant poisonous insect.

Every sixth rouble of the Union's total income is required for protection against the Fascists. It is a heavy sacrifice. The Soviet citizen knows that all the shortcomings, which to-day make life in the Union harder than in the States of the West, would have been removed long ago if only he had had these sixth roubles at his disposal. Each individual would be able to clothe himself better and to be better housed. But the Soviet citizens know,

In one hand the builder's trowel, in the other the sword

too, that malicious fools are lying in wait outside their frontiers ready to attack them and that these frontiers must be effectively protected. Therefore they go about the work of establishing their Socialist economy just as the Jews went about the building of their second temple—in one hand the builder's trowel, and in the other the sword, and they speak of the war, no longer as of a more or less probable event of the distant future, but as an immediately imminent fact. They look war in the face as a bitter necessity, annoyed, yet certain that they are doing right, just as one faces the prospect of a painful operation which has to be undergone but of which the success is assured.

Nevertheless, everything is, of course, being done to postpone the outbreak of the war as long as possible, or even, contrary to all probability, to avoid it altogether. The Union has a keen interest in maintaining peace till the last possible moment. It is busy putting its house in order; the rooms are becoming more habitable, and it is itself becoming richer and stronger day by day. Thus not only does it want to enjoy the new house when it is finally completed, without squabbling with its un-

Necessity of peace

pleasant neighbour, but it knows, too, that the longer it can postpone the outbreak of the war, the stronger it will be and the smaller will be the sacrifice which the ultimate victory will cost.

But, having decided that this war is coming in spite of everything, indeed, that it will be there to-morrow, they are adjusting themselves to it, and this war mentality explains, as I have said, many things which would otherwise be incomprehensible. I have already mentioned the war plays and films which dominate the repertoires, and of the great range of literature commemorating the heroism of those who fought in the Civil War or during the intervention. One could hardly have seen at the front in the four years of the Great War as much slaughter, battle, and conflict as appeared on the stage and screen during the ten weeks of my visit to Moscow.

War mentality

But this war mentality is most clearly revealed by the status of the Red Army. It is in a particularly profound sense a national army; if any army in the world is "Our Army," this is. The affection with which the Soviet people refer to "Our Army" has to be

heard to be believed. Close contact is maintained between the army and the people. By far the greater part of its officers come from the peasantry and proletariat, with the result that the mentality of the leaders, soldiers, and people is the same, and there is in every other respect a close alliance between the civil population and the army. The soldiers are at home in the workers' clubs, the various corps patronise the cultural and sporting organisations, and, moreover, every section of the army has its own specially friendly connection with one particular part of a town, with one particular district, or with one particular workers' or peasants' organisation. Nor does the army take part in the big demonstrations by itself, but links up its sections with sections of the civil population.

"Our Army"

Like the Roman Army in its time, the Red Army looks upon colonisation and the furtherance of the people's education as one of its most important functions. The Red Army has built fine theatres and magnificent libraries, and it gives extensive support to the cinema. It publishes a series of newspapers and periodicals of a generally cultural nature. At a tea-party

Its cultural tasks

which the *Snamja*, the most distinguished literary publication in Moscow, gave for me, I was surprised to meet a very great number of officers. I was told that this periodical was sponsored and brought out by the army.

The versatility of very many of the military men is remarkable, and particularly their great interest in literature. A writer, Leo Trotsky, was one of the organisers of the Red Army, and to-day writers still play an important part in it. I know several generals who hold high positions in the newspaper world as well as in the army. Many writers took part in the Imperialistic and in the Civil Wars, many to-day still keep their rank as officers in the Red Army, and almost all Soviet writers are interested in military matters. One of the leaders of the army, who otherwise reminded one of the best type of Prussian officer of the old school, has made a name for himself as a lyric poet. His poems, even in his own German version, make very good reading. And, furthermore, a Russian writer has contributed considerably to the favourable course of events in the Spanish struggle. I know of no other country where high literary talent is so frequently combined

Writers and soldiers

with military abilities. Numerous authors and editors are prepared to cease the dictation of their manuscripts to-morrow and issue commands to a regiment instead.

Not much shop is talked in the Red Army, either among the officers or the soldiers. Perhaps this springs from the fact that all these men know that they are to go through a war which will demand from each individual more than mere military knowledge. Justification

The psychological advantage which the Red Army will have over its opponents in the event of war lies in the fact that its soldiers will be fighting for a cause made dear to them not only by a vague patriotic instinct, but also by reason. Rational enthusiasm

VI

STALIN AND TROTSKY

As we have just seen, there are men who have stood the test as fighters and, too, as organisers of industrial and peasant work. Joseph Stalin seems to me to be such a man.

Fighter and worker

He has a soldierly, revolutionary past: the victorious defence of the city of Zarizyn, which to-day bears his name, can be credited to him, and his report to Lenin in the autumn of 1918 —a report seventy lines long—brought about the successful alteration of the whole plan of the war. But the work of Stalin the organiser is even greater than the achievements of Stalin the fighter.

The portrait which Leo Trotsky draws of himself, his excellently written autobiography, endeavours to show that he, Trotsky, was a man of similar gifts, a great fighter *and* a great

leader in reconstruction. But this very endeavour, made, as it was, by Trotsky's best advocate, Trotsky himself, seems to me to prove that at best his effectiveness was restricted to the period of the war. Trotsky's self-portrait

Certainly this autobiography is the work of a great writer, and even, perhaps, of a tragic personality. But the self-portrait does not reflect a great statesman. The subject lacks moderation, strength of character, and an eye for reality. Unparalleled arrogance constantly makes him blind to the bounds of possibility, and, however much we are attracted by a writer straining after the impossible, his lack of moderation must be prejudicial to our conception of him as a statesman. The castles of Trotsky's logic seem built in the air instead of on the solid earth of that knowledge of the human soul and of human affairs which alone ensures lasting political results. Trotsky's book is full of hatred, subjective from the first line to the last, passionately unjust. It is always a jumble of truth and fiction, which gives the book charm but betrays a mentality hardly likely to establish him as a politician. A great politician?

To me one small but illuminating detail

makes manifest Stalin's superiority over Trotsky: Stalin gave instructions that a portrait of Trotsky was to be included in the big official *History of the Civil War*, edited by Gorki; Trotsky's book, on the other hand, has only hatred and contempt for Stalin, and maliciously perverts his merits.

A characteristic detail

Granted, it is hard for the vanquished to remain objective. Trotsky, of course, knows this, and gives it expression in fine phrases. The Foreword of his book concludes: "I am not in the habit of contemplating historical perspectives from the angle of personal destiny. To recognise the fixed laws of events and to find one's place in them is the first duty of the revolutionary, and the highest personal satisfaction which can be experienced by a man who does not confine his task to the day."

True words

It seems to me that no clearer definition could be given of the danger which threatened Trotsky after his fall—always a danger for the vanquished—that is, the danger of "contemplating historical perspectives from the angle of personal destiny." Trotsky saw this danger. He was aware of the mistake which it was so easy to make and which was bound to

"Meliora videns deteriora sequens"

tempt him. He was aware of it, determined not to make it, and made it. He saw the better course and chose the worse.

Trotsky appears to me as the type of the pure revolutionary: of great service in the emotional stress of war, but of no further use when all that is needed is calm, steady, systematic work instead of exaltation. As soon as the heroic period of the Revolution was past, his vision of men and affairs became distorted, and he began to see all things in a false light. Obstinately, long after Lenin had adapted his views to the facts, Trotsky clung to the principles which had been proved during the heroic, emotional period, but which were bound to go awry the moment they had to serve everyday needs. As his book shows, Trotsky knows how to carry away crowds in moments of great excitement. Certainly when feelings ran high he was able to let loose a mighty flood of enthusiasm, but what he could not do was to "canalise" the flood and turn it to account in the building up of a great State.

Emotionalism and hysteria

This Stalin can do.

Trotsky is the born writer. His affectionate descriptions of literary activities make good

reading, and I take him at his word when he says: "A well-written book, in which one finds new thoughts, and a good pen, with which one can communicate one's own thoughts to others, have always been, and still are, for me the most precious and intimate products of civilisation." Trotsky's tragedy is that he was not content with being a great writer. This insatiability turned him into a contentious doctrinaire who, by the mischief he made, and meant to make, caused innumerable people to forget his merits.

A born writer

I know this type of writer and revolutionary well, even if only in miniature. Certain leaders of the German Revolution, the Kurt Eisners and Gustav Landauers, had much in common with Trotsky, although, of course, on a smaller scale. Their rigid adherence to a dogma, their inability to adapt themselves to changed circumstances—in short, their lack of practical political psychology—made these theorists and doctrinaires fitted for political action for a short time only. For the greater period of their lives they were good writers, but no politicians. They did not find the way to the heart of the people. They did not know enough of popular and mass psychology. They felt a kinship for

A writer, no politician

the masses which the masses did not feel for them.

While the great conflict between Trotsky and Stalin rests on differences of opinion on all-important points, these differences arise from a more fundamental divergence. It was the natures of the two men which led them to opposite conceptions in regard to the most important questions of the Russian Revolution: the nationality problem, the peasant problem, and the question whether it was possible to establish Socialism in any one country. Stalin held the opinion that complete and practical Socialism could be established without a world revolution, and, moreover, that by the protection of the national interests of the various Soviet peoples it could be established in one separate country; he believed that the Russian peasant had the possibility of Socialism within him. Trotsky disputed that. He declared world revolution to be a necessary condition for the establishment of Socialism; he adhered rigidly to the Marxist doctrine of absolute internationalism; he advocated the tactics of the permanent revolution, and demonstrated with a great show of logic the correctness of the

Antagonism of character and of opinions

Marxist proposition that the establishment of Socialism in any one country was impossible.

Stalin is right

Before the end of 1935 at the latest, the whole world recognised that Socialism had been established in one country and that, what was more, the military resources had been created for the defence of this new structure against any conceivable foe.

What can Trotsky do?

What could Trotsky do? He could keep quiet. He could admit himself beaten and say he had been wrong. He could reconcile himself with Stalin.

He found it impossible. He could not conquer himself. The man who had seen so much that others had not seen, now failed to see what every child saw. Food was being produced at a great pace; the machines were functioning; raw materials were being reclaimed as never before; the country was electrified and motorised. Trotsky would not admit it. He said that the very fact that all this had been accomplished so quickly, and the feverish *tempo* of the construction, must result in fragility. The Soviet Union—the "Stalin State," as he called it—must sooner or later fall to pieces of its own accord, and it was bound to collapse in any case

Only the wrong thing

as soon as the Fascist Powers attacked it. And Trotsky launched forth into extravagant outbursts of hatred against the man in whose name the construction had become a fact.

And what of Stalin?

For a long time he had been occupying himself with the solution of those problems which would become urgent not so much during as immediately after the war. Lenin had written as early as 1913 to Gorki: "We now have a fine Georgian here who is working on a big article on the national question, a question which should be given more serious attention."

Stalin's beginnings

Stalin was giving it attention. He was getting ideas; was proving himself an organiser. Stalin is not a dazzling personality, and remained in the background while the bustling Trotsky shone. Trotsky is a good orator, perhaps the best living orator; he fascinates. Stalin speaks, as I described before, not without humour, but circumstantially, soberly. He had to earn by hard work the popularity which came so easily to the other. He has got where he is simply and solely by his achievements.

The difficulties of his rise

Thus for many years the sometimes false brilliance of Trotsky delayed the full recognition of Stalin's more substantial merits. But when, in time, the ideas of Trotsky, the fighter pure and simple, began to go awry and disintegrate, he, Stalin, was the first to see it and give expression to it. As early as in December 1924, Stalin had become convinced that, contrary to the prevailing theory, the establishment of an entirely Socialist society in one individual country was possible. Logically, more clearly even than Lenin and in very much more precise terms, he pointed out even then how this could be accomplished: by increased industrialisation of the country and co-operative organisation of the peasants. Unambiguously he proclaimed what had previously been disputed—that with the right Party policy the majority of the Russian peasantry could be absorbed into Socialist society; and he substantiated that simply, soberly, and irrefutably.

He comes into view

Trotsky, with his dazzling rhetoric, refuted just as irrefutably Stalin's irrefutable arguments. Stalin knew that his arguments were the ones which were in truth irrefutable; but he

Irrefutable words

had to look on while many were convinced by Trotsky's brilliantly expressed but false refutations.

Stalin was not content merely to see and say the truth. He acted upon it: he worked. He organised the peasants, industrialised, laid the foundations of Socialism in the Union and built it up. The fact he created refuted Trotsky's irrefutable theories.

Irrefutable deeds

"Victrix causa diis placuit, sed victa Catoni." Trotsky would not see that he was disproved. He made irresistible speeches, wrote brilliant articles, pamphlets, and books, showed that Stalin's reality was only a sham since it did not fit his theories. Trotsky was a disturbing influence. The Party Congress pronounced against him, and finally he was sent into exile, forbidden the country.

"Sed victa Catoni"

Stalin's work throve. Coal, iron, and metal ores were reclaimed; power stations sprang up; the heavy industries were by now not far behind those of any other country; cities were built; loans on mortgages increased; the petit-bourgeois objections of the peasants were overcome; their communal farms showed results and they thronged into the collective farms in

The magic of theses

ever-increasing numbers. If Lenin had been the Cæsar of the Soviet Union, then Stalin was becoming its Augustus, its "augmenter," in every respect. Stalin's building grew and grew. But he could not be blind to the fact that there were still people who refused to believe in this visible, tangible work, and who had more faith in Trotsky's theses than in the evidence of their eyes.

Even amongst the very men to whom Stalin was a good friend, and whom he called to high positions, there were some who had more faith in Trotsky's word than in Stalin's work. They hindered this work, resisted it, sabotaged. They were called to account and their guilt was established. Stalin pardoned them and re-instated them in important positions.

Dangerous friends

What must have been Stalin's thoughts and feelings when he found out that these, his colleagues and friends, despite the patent success of his work, still remained attached to his enemy, Trotsky, were intriguing secretly with him and trying to sabotage his own work, the Stalin State, in order to bring back their old leader to the country?

When I saw Stalin, the proceedings against the first Trotsky group, Sinovjev and Kamenev, were over; the accused had been condemned and shot, and an action against the second Trotsky group, Pjatakov, Radek, Bucharin, and Rykov, was pending. But no one had more than a vague idea of the nature of the accusations against them, and it was not yet known whether, when, and against which of them proceedings would be taken. Between two trials

It was during this interval, then, between the two trials, that I saw Stalin.

His portraits give the impression that Stalin is big, broad, and commanding. Actually he is, on the contrary, small and slightly built. He seemed, as it were, lost in the vast room of the Kremlin in which I found him. Stalin

Stalin speaks slowly, in a low, rather colourless voice. He has no liking for a dialogue of short, excited questions, answers, and interruptions, but prefers to string together slow, considered sentences. Often what he says sounds ready for press, as if he were dictating. He walks up and down whilst he is speaking, then suddenly approaches you, pointing a finger of Manner of speaking

his beautiful hand, expounding, didactic; or, whilst he is forming his considered sentences, draws arabesques and figures on a sheet of paper with a blue and red pencil.

No arrangement had been made as to what I was to discuss with Stalin. I had prepared no subjects of conversation of any sort: I wanted to leave it to the impression of the man and the inspiration of the moment to determine what I should talk about. I was rather afraid that it might be one of those more or less official, set conversations such as Stalin has had on two or three occasions with Western writers. And at first it did seem as if this was to be the case. We spoke of the function of the writer in Socialist society, of the revolutionary effect which is often exercised even by reactionary writers, as, for example, Gogol; of the intellectual and how far he is affected or unaffected by his class; of freedom of speech and of writing in the Soviet Union. At first Stalin spoke cautiously and in general terms. But gradually he grew more expansive, and soon I realised that I could talk frankly with this man. I spoke candidly and he replied candidly.

Reserved and frank

Stalin speaks without embellishment, and, moreover, can express complicated thoughts simply. Often he speaks almost too simply, accustomed as he is to formulating his thoughts so that they will be understood from Moscow to Vladivostok. He has perhaps no wit, but he most certainly has humour; and his humour can be dangerous. Now and again he laughs a soft, dull, sly laugh. He is at home in many spheres, and he quotes names, dates, and facts, from memory, accurately and without hesitation.

Oratorical style

We spoke about the freedom of writing, about democracy, and, as I have already mentioned, about Stalin-worship. Only at the beginning of the conversation did Stalin express himself in general terms, using sundry hackneyed expressions from the Party vocabulary. Soon he ceased to be the Party leader and became an individual, not always uncontradicting, but always modest, unpresuming, and deliberate.

Individuality

He became excited when we talked of the Trotskyist trials, and spoke in detail of the charges against Pjatakov and Radek, the substance of which was not at that time com-

mon property. He spoke of the panic which the Fascist danger aroused in people who could not think to a logical conclusion. I referred again to the harmful effect which the all too simple conduct of the Sinovjev trial had had abroad, even amongst well-wishers. Stalin laughed a little at those who demanded many written documents before they could bring themselves to believe in a conspiracy; practised conspirators, he said, were not in the habit of leaving their documents lying around for all to see. Finally, he spoke bitterly and with feeling of the writer Radek, the most popular of the men involved in the second Trotskyist trial. He described his friendly relations with the man. "You Jews," he said, "have created one eternally true legend—that of Judas," and it was strange to hear a man, otherwise so sober and logical, utter these simple, emotional words. He mentioned a long letter which Radek had written to him and in which he had protested his innocence on many unconvincing grounds. The very next day, under pressure of witnesses and circumstantial evidence, he had confessed.

Stalin and "Judas"

Does Joseph Stalin hate this Leo Trotsky? He is bound to hate him. I have already pointed out that they are separated as much by antithesis of character as of opinions. One could hardly imagine greater contrasts than exist between the oratorical Trotsky, with his sudden inspirations, and the simple, always reserved, sombre Stalin, who builds up his thoughts slowly and doggedly. As the Austrian poet Grillpärzer puts it:

Contrast between Stalin and Trotsky

Einfälle sind keine Gedanken,
Der Gedanke kennt die Schranken.
Der Einfall setzt sich darüber weg
Und kommt in der Ausführung nicht vom Fleck.

(*They are not thoughts, these flashes of the mind;*
Thought knows the bounds in which it lies confined.
Inspiration rockets to the skies,
And, spent, has never left the place where quiet thought lies.)

Leo Trotsky, the writer, has the flashing but often false inspirations; Joseph Stalin the slow, painstaking, thoroughly sound thoughts.

Trotsky is a dazzling phenomenon; Stalin the type of the Russian peasant and worker who has risen to genius, predestined to victory, since in him the strength of both classes is united. Trotsky is the rocket soon spent; Stalin the warming, lasting fire.

A dramatist making opposites of two men of characters so antithetical could only expect to be accused of forcing his situations and straining after effect. Trotsky is adaptable both in speech and manner; can express himself without difficulty in several languages, is arrogant, scintillating, witty. Stalin, on the other hand, is slower. He gained his education in a priests' seminary by dogged and conscientious effort. He is not adaptable. But he knows thoroughly the requirements of his peasants and workers. He belongs to them. It was never necessary for him, as it was for Trotsky, to find a way to them from foreign territories. Must not all that is sparkling, agile, ambiguous, and haughty in Trotsky be just as distasteful to Stalin as Stalin's unyielding solidity is to Trotsky?

Further contrasts

Stalin sees before him a colossal task which calls for the whole strength even of an unusually

strong man, and a very great part of this strength had to be spent in repairing the harm which Trotsky's brilliant and dangerous inspirations had done. " Trotsky's non-Bolshevist past is no accident," is written in Lenin's will. Without doubt this passage is always present to Stalin, and he sees in Trotsky a man whose flexibility makes it possible for him to revert again with complete conviction to his non-Bolshevist past, should the occasion present itself. Yes, Stalin must hate Trotsky, firstly because his whole being is in constant opposition to him, and then because this Trotsky jeopardises Stalin's work by everything he says, writes, and does; indeed, by his very existence. Hatred

When one has considered only their rivalry, the difference of their very natures and opinions and their hatred, one has not exhausted the reactions of Stalin to Trotsky. Stalin, the great organiser, who has recognised that even the Russian peasant can be socialised from within, is trying, great calculator and psychologist as he is, to make even his opponent's qualities, which he by no means undervalues, serve his purposes. He is supposed to be ruthless, but for many years he has been Attraction

striving to win over competent Trotskyists rather than destroy them, and it is, in a way, affecting to see how doggedly he is endeavouring to use them for his work.

VII

THE EXPLICABLE AND THE INEXPLICABLE IN THE TROTSKYIST TRIALS

HOWEVER, this same Stalin finally decided to put his opponents the Trotskyists on trial once again. He had them indicted with high treason, espionage, "wrecking," and other disintegrating activities, as well as with the preparation of acts of terrorism. In trials which incensed the whole world against the Soviet Union by their "savageness and barbarity," Stalin's Trotskyist opponents were humiliated to the utmost. They were condemned, and shot.

The proceedings against the Trotskyists

It is stupid to ascribe these trials, the Sinovjev and Radek trials, merely to Stalin's ambition and vengefulness. Joseph Stalin, who, in spite of the opposition of the whole world has achieved so great a task in the building up of

Stalin's personal motives?

the economic system of the Soviet Union, this Marxist Stalin, does not prejudice his country's foreign policy, and thereby an important part of his work, from the personal motives which schoolboys attribute to the heroes of their historical essays.

The author and the trials

My knowledge of the trial of Sinovjev and Kamenev is derived from Press reports and the accounts of eye-witnesses; I was myself present at the trial of Pjatakov and Radek. I thus experienced the first of these trials in the atmosphere of Western Europe, and the second in the atmosphere of Moscow. To compare one's reactions to these trials in Moscow with one's reaction in Europe is to realise the whole enormous difference between the Soviet Union and the West.

Effect of the trials abroad

Several of my friends, who are otherwise not unintelligent people, find these trials from beginning to end, in substance and form, tragi-comical, barbaric, incredible, and appalling. Many who had before been friends of the Soviet Union have become its opponents as a result of these trials. Some, who had seen in the social order of the Union the ideal of Socialistic humanism, were left stupefied; for these

people, the shots which had been fired at Sinovjev and Kamenev had destroyed not only them, but the whole new world.

And to me also, as long as I was in Western Europe, the indictment of the Sinovjev trial seemed utterly incredible. The hysterical confessions of the accused seemed to have been extorted by some mysterious means, and the whole proceedings appeared like a play staged with consummate, strange, and frightful artistry.

It is one thing in Western Europe

But when I attended the second trial in Moscow, when I saw Pjatakov, Radek, and his friends, and heard what they said and how they said it, I was forced to accept the evidence of my senses, and my doubts melted away as naturally as salt dissolves in water. If that was lying or prearranged, then I don't know what truth is.

and another in Moscow

So I took up the records of the trials, reflected on what I had seen with my own eyes and heard with my own ears, and considered once more the pros and cons of the charge.

Examination

Fundamentally, the proceedings were directed above all against the great Trotsky, indicted and absent, and the principal objection

Unauthenticity of the charge against Trotsky

is the alleged unauthenticity of the charge brought against him. " This man Trotsky," its opponents cry, " one of the founders of the Soviet State, Lenin's friend, is supposed himself to have given general instructions to sabotage the building up of the State which he had helped to found, to kindle war against it, and to scheme for its defeat in this war. Is that conceivable ? Is that credible ? "

Credibility

That may be, but closer examination reveals that the conduct of which the charge accuses Trotsky, far from being incredible, is the only conduct which can be expected from Trotsky's state of mind.

Reasons

" Imagine this man Trotsky, condemned, as he was, to inactivity, compelled to look on idly, whilst the noble experiment which Lenin and he had begun was transformed into a sort of gigantic petit-bourgeois allotment. For to him, who wanted to steep the terrestrial globe in Socialism, the ' Stalin State,' as he says in word and writing, appeared a ridiculous caricature of his original idea. In addition, there is the deep personal antagonism towards Stalin, the compromiser, who had always bungled his, the creator of the Plan's work, and

had finally expelled him. Trotsky has given expression time and time again to his unbounded hatred and contempt for Stalin. Would he not translate into action what he had expressed in word and writing?"

It also seems to me to be conceivable that a man who, blinded by hate, refused to admit to himself the generally acknowledged facts of the accomplished economic construction of the Union and the strength of its army, would be incapable of seeing the uselessness of his expedient and would choose a course which was manifestly wrong. Trotsky is bold and unhesitating, a great gambler. His whole life is a chain of adventures, and foolhardy projects had often turned out very successfully for him. Trotsky, all his life an optimist, had relied on his being able to utilise evil to attain his ends, and finally, if it should become necessary, to cut it out and render it harmless. If Alcibiades went to the Persians, why not Trotsky to the Fascists?

Alcibiades and the Persians

Trotsky was never a Russian patriot; the Stalin State was repugnant to him: he was concerned with world revolution. A collation of the exiled Trotsky's utterances against

The exile's hatred for his exiler

Stalin and his State would be encyclopædic in its range of hatred, irony, rage, and contempt. What, then, must have been Trotsky's principal goal during all the years of exile, and what must be his principal goal to-day? To get back into the country at any price and reassume power.

Shakespeare's Coriolanus, when he goes to Rome's enemies, the Volscians, says, in speaking of the false friends who have all forsaken him:

Shakespeare on Trotsky

"*. . . suffer'd me by the voice of slaves to be*
Whoop'd out of Rome. Now this extremity
Hath brought me to thy hearth . . .
. . . but in mere spite,
To be full quit of those my banishers,
Stand I before thee here."

This is Shakespeare's opinion on the likelihood of Trotsky's having come to an arrangement with the Fascists.

"Trotsky's non-Bolshevist past is no accident." This is the opinion which Lenin expresses in his will on the likelihood of Trotsky's having come to an arrangement with the Fascists.

And Emil Ludwig gives an account of a conversation which he had with Trotsky on the Isle of Prinkipo, near Stambul, soon after his exile. Emil Ludwig published this conversation in 1931, in his book *Geschenke des Lebens*, and what Trotsky said then, as early as 1931, should give all those people who find the charge against him ridiculous and absurd seriously to think. " His own party," reports Ludwig (I am quoting verbatim), " he declares to be scattered and therefore difficult to estimate. ' And when could it come together ? ' ' When an opportunity is presented from outside—perhaps a war or a new European intervention, when the weakness of the Government would act as a stimulus.' ' But the Government is least likely to let you out when the others want to let you in.' Pause of contempt. ' Ah, ways could be found.' At this, even Frau Trotsky had to laugh."

Trotsky on Trotsky

This is Trotsky's opinion on the likelihood of Trotsky's having come to an arrangement with the Fascists.

Now, as to the men who appeared before the court in this second trial, Pjatakov, Sokolnikov,

Is the charge against Radek and Pjatakov authentic?

Radek, it is protested that it is improbable that men of their rank and influence would have sabotaged the State, to which they owed their positions and their effectiveness, and that they would have been party to the foolhardy plans with which the indictment charges them.

It seems to me wrong to see in these people nothing more than men of position and influence. Pjatakov and Sokolnikov were not simply high officials; Radek was not simply the chief editor of the *Isvestja* and Stalin's friend and adviser. Most of the accused were, on the other hand, first and foremost conspirators, revolutionaries; all their lives they had been impassioned revolutionaries and changers—they were born to it. Everything they had achieved they had achieved in defiance of the predictions of "sensible people," by courage, by their love of adventure, and by their optimism. Moreover, they believed in Trotsky, whose powers of suggestion cannot be overestimated. With their master, they saw in the "Stalin State" a caricature of what they had wanted to achieve, and their chief object was to correct this caricature according to their own ideas.

Ideological motives of the accused

Nor must one overlook the personal interests which the accused were bound to have in a revolution. The ambition and greed for power of every one of these men remained unappeased. They held official posts of importance and honour, but none of them occupied the very highest places, which they believed to be their due. None of them happened to sit in the " Political Bureau." True, they were taken back into favour, but nevertheless they had appeared before the court as Trotskyists and no longer had any prospect of advancing to the highest ranks. In a certain sense they were all degraded and " no one is more dangerous than the officer whose epaulettes have been torn off," says Radek, who should know.

Material motives

The conduct of the trials is attacked no less fiercely than the charge. If they had documents and witnesses, ask the sceptics, why did they keep the documents in the drawer and the witnesses behind the scenes, contenting themselves with incredible confessions?

Objections to the trial

It is true, the Soviet people reply, that in the main proceedings we have to a certain extent shown only the distillate, the prepared result of the preliminary enquiry. We examined the

evidence beforehand, and confronted the accused with it. In the main proceedings we contented ourselves with their confessions. Anyone who takes exception to this should bear in mind that the hearing took place before a military court, and that it was first and foremost a political action. The purification of the atmosphere of our internal politics was at stake, and it was our chief concern that every member of the community from Minsk to Vladivostok should understand what was wrong. Therefore we did everything as simply and as transparently as possible. Details of circumstantial evidence, documents, and depositions may interest jurists, criminalists, and historians, but we should only have confused our Soviet citizens had we spun out all kinds of details. The plain confessions were more intelligible to them than any amount of ingeniously assembled circumstantial evidence. We did not carry on this action for the benefit of foreign criminalists; we did it for the benefit of our own people.

The Soviet people's reply

It cannot be denied that the most impressive feature of the confessions is their precision and coherence, and so the sceptics have built up

fantastic hypotheses as to the methods employed to bring them about. Fantastic hypotheses

The first and most reasonable supposition is, of course, that the confessions were extracted from the prisoners by torture and by the threat of still worse tortures. Yet this first conjecture was refuted by the obvious freshness and vitality of the prisoners, by their whole physical and mental aspect. Thus in order to explain the "impossible" confessions, the sceptics had to grope round for other causes. The prisoners, they proclaimed, had been given all sorts of poisons; they had been hypnotised and drugged. If this be true, then no one else in the world has ever succeeded in obtaining such powerful and lasting results, and the scientist who did succeed would hardly be satisfied with acting as the mysterious handy man of police forces. He would presumably use his methods with a view to increasing his scientific prestige. But those who take exception to the conduct of the trial prefer to clutch at the most absurd backstair hypotheses rather than believe what is under their noses—that the prisoners were properly convicted, and that their confessions were founded on fact. Poison and hypnosis

When one speaks to the Soviet people of hypotheses such as these, they merely shrug their shoulders and smile. Why should we, they say, if we wanted to falsify the facts, resort to such difficult and dangerous expedients as spurious confessions? Would it not have been simpler to forge documents? Do you think that, instead of letting Trotsky make highly treasonable speeches through the mouths of Pjatakov and Radek, we could not much more easily have brought before the eyes of the world highly treasonable letters of his, and documents which would have proved his association with the Fascists much more directly? You have seen and heard the accused: did you get the impression that their confessions had been extorted?

The Soviet people smile

Indeed I did not. The men who stood before the court were not tortured and desperate people before their executioner. There was no justification of any sort for imagining that there was anything manufactured, artificial, or even awe-inspiring or emotional about these proceedings.

Milieu of the trial

The room in which the trial took place is not large: it holds about three hundred and fifty people. The judges, the public prosecutor, the accused, the counsel for the defence, and the experts sat on a low platform which had steps leading up to it, and there was no barrier between the court and the public. There was nothing in the nature of a prisoners' dock; the barrier which divided the prisoners from the others reminded one rather of the support round a *loge*. The prisoners themselves were well-groomed, well-dressed men of a careless, natural bearing. They drank tea, had newspapers in their pockets, and often looked towards the public. The whole thing was less like a criminal trial than a debate carried on in a conversational tone by educated men who were trying to get at the truth and explain why what had happened had happened. Indeed, the impression one received was that the accused, prosecution, and judges had the same, I might almost say sporting, interest in arriving at a satisfactory explanation of what had happened, without omitting anything. If a producer had had to arrange this court scene, years of rehearsal and careful coaching would

Picture of the accused

have been necessary to get the prisoners to correct one another eagerly on small points and to express their emotion with such restraint. In short, the hypnotisers, poison-mixers, and police officers who prepared the prisoners would, in addition to their normal bewildering qualifications, have had to have been first-class stage-managers and psychologists.

Unreal and uncanny was the detachment and bluntness with which these men, just before their as good as certain death, set forth and explained their conduct and their guilt. It is a pity that the laws of the Soviet Union forbade photographs and gramophone records to be made in court. If one could have reproduced for the whole world not only what the prisoners said, but how they said it, their intonations, their faces, I think there would be very few sceptics left.

Detachment

They all confessed, but each in a different way; the first with a note of cynicism in his voice; the second with a soldier's uprightness; the third conquering himself, not without an internal struggle; the fourth like a schoolboy who is sorry; the fifth lecturing. But everyone

Behaviour

with the tone, the appearance and gestures of truth.

I shall never forget how this George Pjatakov stood in front of the microphone, a middle-aged man of average build, rather bald, with a reddish, old-fashioned sparse, pointed beard, and how he lectured. Calmly, and at the same time sedulously, he explained how he had managed to sabotage the industries under him. He expounded, pointed his finger, gave the impression of a school teacher, a historian giving a lecture on the life and deeds of a man who had been dead for many years, named Pjatakov, anxious to make everything clear even to the smallest details so that his listeners and students should understand fully. Pjatakov

Nor shall I easily forget Karl Radek, the writer; how he sat there in his brown suit, his ugly fleshless face framed by a chestnut-coloured old-fashioned beard; how he looked over to the public, a great many of whom he knew, or at the other prisoners, often smiling, very composed, often studiedly ironical; how he laid his arm with a light and easy gesture round the shoulders of this or that prisoner as he came in; how, when he spoke, he would Karl Radek

pose a little, laugh a little at the other prisoners, show his superiority; arrogant, sceptical, adroit, literary. Somewhat brusquely, he pushed Pjatakov away from the microphone and himself took up his position there; often he smote the barrier with his newspaper, or took up his glass of tea, threw a piece of lemon in, stirred it up, and, whilst he uttered the most atrocious things, drank it in little sips. Nevertheless, he was quite free from pose whilst he spoke his concluding words, in which he admitted why he had confessed, and, despite his apparent imperturbability and the finished perfection of his wording, this admission gave the impression of being the self-revelation of a man in great distress, and it was very affecting. But most startling of all, and difficult to explain, was the gesture with which Radek left the court after the conclusion of the proceedings, It was towards four o'clock in the morning, and everyone—judges, accused, and public—was exhausted. Of the seventeen prisoners, thirteen, amongst whom were close friends of Radek, had been condemned to death, while he himself and three others had been sentenced only to imprisonment. The judge had read the

verdict, and all of us had listened to it standing up—prisoners and public motionless, in deep silence. Immediately after the reading the judges retired and soldiers appeared, and first of all approached the four who had not been condemned to death. One of them laid his hand on Radek's shoulder, evidently with an order to follow him. And Radek followed him. He turned round, raised a hand in greeting, shrugged his shoulders very slightly, nodded to the others, his friends who were condemned to death, and smiled. Yes, he smiled.

It is difficult, too, to forget the circumstantial, laborious narration of the engineer Stroilov, telling how he fell in with the Trotskyist organisation, how he made desperate efforts and tried to wriggle out, but how they held him fast by what he had already done and would not let him out of the net again. Unforgettable, again, was that Jewish cobbler with his rabbi's beard, Drobnis, who had distinguished himself above all others in the Civil War; who, after six years of Tsarist imprisonment, and having been three times condemned to death by the White Guards, had miraculously escaped, and now, before the court, was

The others

getting tangled up, twisting and turning when the time came for him to confess that he had brought about explosions which had caused not only material damage, but, wittingly, the death of workers. It was affecting, too, to see the engineer Norkin, who, pale with agitation, cursed Trotsky with his "last words," cried out his "burning contempt and hatred for him," and immediately afterwards had to leave the court-room because he felt ill. Incidentally, this was the first and only time during the whole proceedings that anyone became excited; otherwise, judges, public prosecutor, and accused all spoke calmly and without emotion, and not one of them ever raised his voice.

Why did they not defend themselves?

Apart from the objections I have already mentioned, the sceptics base their reluctance to admit that the charge might be authentic on the fact that the prisoners' attitude before the court lends itself to no psychological explanation. Why, the unbelievers ask, did the prisoners, instead of disputing their guilt, vie with one another in their confessions? And what

confessions ! They depicted themselves as black, vile criminals. Why did they not defend themselves like any other prisoners before the law ? Why, even if they were bound to be convicted, did they not try to plead extenuating circumstances, instead of, on the contrary, incriminating themselves more and more ? Why, since they believed in Trotsky's theories, did these revolutionaries and ideologues not acknowledge their leader and his theories ? Why, since they were speaking for the last time before the masses, did they not glory in what they had done, which they must after all have considered laudable ? It is perhaps conceivable that three or four of the seventeen might have humiliated themselves. But all . . .

The fact that the prisoners confessed, reply the Soviet people, can be explained very simply. It was because they were so irrevocably convicted by witnesses and documents during the preliminary enquiry that denial would have been senseless. The fact that they *all* confessed also has its explanation. By no means all the Trotskyists who were implicated in the plot were brought up for trial, but only those whose guilt was proved up to the hilt. That the

For this reason, say the Soviet people

confessions sounded emotional is due chiefly to the translation. It is difficult to catch the modulations of the Russian language, and, when translated, it can very easily have a superlative, extravagant, and odd effect. (This is quite true. I once happened to hear a policeman on point duty say to my chauffeur: "Will you please, comrade, be so kind as to show reverence for the regulations?" Such a mode of expression seems strange enough. It seems less strange, however, if one translates the sense rather than the text: "Why can't you keep to the rules, man." But the translation of the minutes of the trial sounds more like "show reverence for the regulations" than "keep to the rules.")

Author's opinion

I must admit that although the trial has convinced me of the guilt of the prisoners, I can find no completely satisfactory explanation of their behaviour before the court, notwithstanding the arguments of the Soviet people. Immediately after the trial, I summarised my impressions in a commentary for the Soviet Press: "West Europeans are experiencing some difficulty in arriving at the fundamental causes of the procedure adopted by the

accused, and, above all, the ultimate reasons for their behaviour before the court. It may be that the deeds of most of these men deserved death: but invective and outbursts of indignation, understandable though these may be, will not give an explanation of the psychology of these men. It would take a great Soviet poet to make their guilt and their sin comprehensible to Western minds." That is on no account to be taken as meaning that I want to find fault with the conduct of the trial or with its findings. Were I asked for the quintessence of my opinion, I could perhaps only follow the example of that modest essayist Ernst Bloch, and quote Socrates, who, when questioned regarding certain obscurities in Heraclitus, replied: "What I have understood is excellent. From which I conclude that the rest which I have not understood is also excellent."

The Soviet people do not understand all this lack of comprehension. At a meeting after the conclusion of the trial, a Moscow writer became vehement on the subject of my commentary quoted above: "Feuchtwanger does not understand the motives which have led the

Attempt at an explanation

accused to confess. The quarter of a million workers who are now demonstrating in the Red Square do understand them." But it seems to me, nevertheless, that I took more pains to arrive at an understanding of the trial than most Western critics, and as the Soviet poet who might throw light upon the motives for the confessions is not yet to be found, I shall try to describe the genesis of the confessions as I imagine it to be.

A kind of Party Court

One would be justified in calling the court before which the trial took place a sort of Party Court. From early youth the accused had been adherents of the Party: several of them ranked amongst its leaders. Now, it would be quite wrong to assume that anyone summoned to appear before a Party Court would comport himself like a man called before an ordinary Western court of justice. It was more than a mere slip of the tongue on Radek's part when he addressed the judges as " Comrade Judges " and had to be reminded by the presiding official to say " Citizen Judges." Even the accused still feels himself linked to the Party, and it is no mere chance that the trial bore throughout that resemblance to a

debate so strange to Western peoples. The judges, the public prosecutor, and the accused not only seemed, but indeed were, united by a common object. They were like engineers who had been given a new and complicated machine to test. Some of them had damaged something in the machine, not maliciously, but because they obstinately wanted to test their own theories for its improvement. Their methods proved to be wrong, but they, no less than the others, have the efficiency of the machine at heart, and therefore they confer frankly with the others on their mistakes. What holds them all together is interest in the machine, love for it. It is this common feeling which enables judges and accused to work together with such unanimity of purpose—a feeling somewhat akin, perhaps, to that which in England links the Government with the Opposition so closely that the Leader of the Opposition receives a salary of £2,000 from the State.

The prisoners were disciples of Trotsky. Even after his fall they had still retained their faith in him. But they were living inside the Soviet Union, and what for the exiled Trotsky were

The prophet Balaam

distant vague figures and statistics, were for them a concrete materialisation. In the face of this materialisation, Trotsky's principle, that the establishment of Socialist economy in one separate country was impossible, could not hold out for long. During 1935, in view of the increasing prosperity of the Union, the accused were forced to recognise that Trotskyism was bankrupt. "They lost," said Radek, "their faith in Trotsky's doctrines." In these circumstances it was in the nature of things that the confessions should sound like a forced hymn of praise to Stalin's regime. The accused are like the Old Testament heathen prophet Balaam, who set out to curse and, against his will, had to bless.

For eight months the accused Muralov had denied the charges before, on December 5th, he confessed. "Although," he said, during the trial, "I considered Trotsky's general instructions, terror and sabotage, to be wrong, it seemed to me morally impossible to act as a traitor to Trotsky. But finally, when the others withdrew their support, some honestly, the others dishonestly, I said to myself: 'I have fought actively for the Soviet Union in three

revolutions and dozens of times my life hung on a thread. Ought I not now to subordinate myself to the Union's interests? Or am I to stand by Trotsky and spread and consolidate his false doctrines? But then my name will become a banner for those who are still in the ranks of counter-revolution. The others, whether they withdrew their support from Trotsky honestly or dishonestly, at any rate will not follow the flag of the counter-revolution. Am I, then, to stand out as such a paragon of virtue?' This was the turning-point for me, and I said to myself: 'Right, now I will proceed to spread the entire truth.'"

Defection from Trotsky

Radek's declarations on the same subject, although more varied in form, said in effect the same thing. Both men's explanations, quite apart from the trial, seem to me to be psychologically interesting. They are an example of how far men will accompany one in whose superior leadership, genius, and doctrines they believe, and at what point they will leave him. The rash and desperate measures to which a Trotsky was resolved to resort after his fundamental ideas had proved to be false were bound to scare his lesser partisans. They began to see

madness in his methods. They did not publicly denounce him earlier because they did not know how to go about it. "We would have gone to the police," said Radek, "if they had not come to us first," and this can easily be believed. Some of the accused actually had gone to the police first, and the whole plot was thereby exploded.

People who believe in their cause

As far as it goes, the sceptics' objection is justified. People who believe in a cause and who are as good as lost do not betray the cause in their last hours. They realise that this is their last and greatest opportunity of speaking in public, and use it to propagate their cause. Hundreds of revolutionaries declare before Hitler's courts: "Yes, I did what I am accused of. You can put me to death, but I am proud of what I have done." As far as they go, then, the sceptics are justified in asking: Why is it that not one of these Trotskyists has spoken in this way? Why has not one of them said: "Yes, your Stalin State is wrong. Trotsky is right. What I did was for the best. Put me to death, but I stand by it."

But there is a forcible reply to this objection. These Trotskyists did not adopt this attitude

simply because they no longer believed in Trotsky; because in their own hearts they could no longer stand by what they had done, and because their Trotskyist convictions had been refuted by facts so completely that anyone with eyes to see could no longer have faith in them. What, then, was there left for them, once having ranged themselves on the wrong side? What was there left for them, confirmed Socialists as they were, on their last appearance before their death, but the confession: "Socialism cannot be realised in Trotsky's way, the way we have gone, but only in the other way—Stalin's."

Men who do not believe in their cause

But even leaving aside ideological motives, and only taking into consideration the external circumstances, the accused were positively compelled to confess. What were they to do, once they had been convicted by overwhelming evidence? They were lost in any event, whether they confessed or not. If they confessed, then perhaps, in spite of everything, their confession might kindle for them a faint spark of hope of pardon. In other words, if they did not confess, they were one hundred per cent lost; if they did confess, they were ninety-nine per cent

Ninety-nine or a hundred per cent

lost. As a confession did not run counter to their consciences, why, then, should they not make it? It is apparent, moreover, from their concluding words, that this consideration was present in their minds. Of the seventeen prisoners, twelve asked the judges to take their confessions into account as an extenuating circumstance, when finding their verdict.

They could hardly avoid using much the same expressions for this request, and after a time this produced an almost macabre, tragi-comical effect. In the end, indeed, when the last of the prisoners had spoken their concluding words, one began to wait for this request with considerable tension, and when it actually came, and necessarily in the same monotonous form, the public could hardly repress their laughter.

A tragi-comical moment

Still more difficult, perhaps, than the question of the motives of the prisoners is that of the reasons which prompted the Government to bring this trial so far into the limelight and invite the Press and public of the world to it. What did they hope to get out of it? Was not this manifestation bound to have consequences rather painful than favourable? The Sinovjev

Why all the publicity?

trial had had a disastrous effect abroad. It had furnished opponents with welcome material for propaganda and made many friends waver. It had evoked doubts as to the stability of the regime, in which previously even its enemies had believed. Why, then, were they so lightheartedly jeopardising their own prestige by a second trial of the same kind?

The reason, the opponents assert, is Stalin's ruthless despotism, his delight in terror. It is quite obvious: this man Stalin, with all his feelings of inferiority and boundless lust for power and for revenge, wants to wreak vengeance on all those who have at any time injured him and all who might be dangerous to him in any way. Like Hitler, he wants to shoot a clear space all around him.

Stalin as Genghis Khan

Such nonsense betrays an ignorance of the human soul and a lack of discernment. Read any book or any speech of Stalin's, look at any portrait of him, think of any measure which he has taken for the purposes of the construction. It at once becomes as clear as daylight that this modest, impersonal man cannot possibly have committed the colossal indiscretion of producing, with the assistance of countless

Poor psychologists

performers, so coarse a comedy, merely for the purpose of holding a sort of festival of revenge, with Bengal-lights to celebrate the humiliation of his opponents.

Solution

I believe that the solution to the question is simpler and at the same time more complicated, if one considers the Soviet Union's determination to proceed along the path to democracy, and if one considers, above all, the war mentality to which I have already had to draw attention more than once.

Democratisation and danger of war

The increasing democratisation, particularly the subject-matter of the draft of the new Constitution, was bound to give the Trotskyists fresh buoyancy, to make them hopeful of being able to increase their activities and pursue their agitation more effectively. The Government considered the time ripe to show its firm intention of nipping every Trotskyist activity in the bud. But, above all, it was certainly the immediately imminent danger of war which caused the leaders of the Soviet Union to broadcast the trial so widely. Formerly the Trotskyists had been less dangerous and it was possible to pardon them, or, at the very worst, exile them. Exile is not a very effective

expedient: Stalin, who had himself been banished six times and had six times escaped, knows that. Now, faced with immediate war, such leniency could no longer be afforded. A breach or a division, which is unimportant in time of peace, can in time of war become a very great danger. Since the assassination of Kirov, it had been left to the military courts of the Soviet Union to deal with the Trotskyists. It was a court-martial which conducted the trial of these men, and a court-martial which condemned them.

The two fronts of the Soviet Union

The Soviet Union presents two fronts: that of the fighting Union is the terrorist sternness with which it tramples all opposition underfoot; that of the constructive Union is the democracy which it has shown in its Constitution to be its ultimate goal. It is significant that it was between the two Trotskyist trials, between the Sinovjev and Radek trials, that an Extraordinary Congress accepted the new Constitution.

VIII

HATRED AND LOVE

THE VIOLENCE with which even well-wishers abroad reacted to the Trotskyist trials was completely incomprehensible to the Soviet citizens. I have already referred to the deep disappointment and the despair of many who had seen in the Soviet Union the fulfilment of their democratic dreams, the last stronghold of civilisation before its collapse, and who now, since they were unable to free themselves from their own conceptions of democracy, were stripped of all their illusions as a result of these "arbitrary and terrorist trials."

Disappointment of the democrats

For many this disappointment was certainly honest. Nevertheless, there are also intellectuals to whom it was welcome. The violence with which these people reacted to the trials undoubtedly springs from some innermost part of their being impervious to the dictates of reason.

Uneasiness with regard to the Soviet Union

It springs from the uneasiness which the mere existence of the Soviet Union causes them, from uneasiness about the problems with which the formation of this new Socialist State confronts them.

Many intellectuals, indeed, even such as consider the liquidation of the capitalist system by the Socialist to be a historical necessity, are afraid of the disorder of the transition period. They honestly look forward to a world victory for Socialism, but they are anxious about their own future during the time the great Socialist revolution is taking place. Their heart denies what their brain accepts. Theoretically they are Socialists, but in practice their attitude supports the capitalist order. The very existence of the Soviet Union is to them a constant reminder of the fragility of their own existence and a constant reproach for the ambiguity of their own conduct. The fact that the Soviet Union is there serves as a heartening confirmation that there is still reason in the world; but for the rest, they do not like the Union, and are very much more inclined to hate it.

Fear of Socialism

For these reasons they welcome, even when they do not admit it to themselves, every

opportunity of picking a hole in the Soviet Union. The " enigma " of the Trotskyist trials was an occasion for stigmatising the apparent arbitrariness of the proceedings in brilliant and ironical articles. The " terror " which was showing itself in the Soviet Union was proof enough to them that the Union was at bottom no different from the Fascist States, and that therefore they had been right in not acclaiming it. This " terror " justified their indecision and negligence and quieted their consciences. The " despotism " of the Soviet Union was for them a welcome cloak with which to cover their own nakedness.

Welcome " terror "

It caused no surprise in the Soviet Union. The repercussions of the Sinovjev trial did not discourage the Union from arranging a second Trotskyist trial. The good it did to their internal politics, this public cleansing of their own house immediately before the war, amply compensated the moral prestige which they might lose in the eyes of incompetent foreign critics.

No surprise

The Soviet Union has no false ideas about the mentality abroad. Its people boast that their Red Army alone has preserved the world

up to the present from the outbreak of the great Fascist war and saved civilisation from the onslaught of the barbarians. The Soviet people know full well that it is only for the sake of their arms, only for the sake of the Red Army, and only in consequence of their own weakness that the so-called democracies have concluded alliances with them. They did not conclude them willingly, and now, when the leaders of the democracies have at last succeeded in cajoling their Parliaments and their public opinion into consenting to their own armament, they are taking even less pains than before to conceal their antipathy towards the Union. The Soviet people are practical politicians, and the effect of the trial has not surprised them.

Practical political thought

In his concluding words, Radek told how, throughout two and a half months, every single word of the confession had had to be forced out of him and how difficult he had made it for the examining magistrate. " It was not I who was tortured by the examining magistrate," he said, " but the examining magistrate who was tortured by me." Several important English newspapers reported on this utterance of Radek's under the heavy headlines: " Radek

Radek tortured

tortured." I believe I was the only person in Moscow who was surprised at this kind of reporting.

In short, I find the attitude which many Western intellectuals have adopted towards the Soviet Union short-sighted and unmerited. They cannot see how vitally important the Union's work is to the world; they will not realise that history cannot be made with gloves on. They come with their absolute standards and want to measure to a fraction of an inch how much freedom and democracy there is here. However widely it may be accepted that the objects of the Soviet Union are reasonable and in the highest sense humane, these Western intellectuals are extremely puritanical in their criticism of its methods. For them, in this case, the end does not justify the means, but the means dishonour the end.

The moralists

This I can understand. I myself, in my youth, belonged to this class of intellectual which advanced the principle of absolute pacifism, of complete abstention from violence. During the war, I unlearned it, and as long ago as that I

wrote a play, *Warren Hastings*, which depicts a trial which, when it took place, excited the world just as the Trotskyist trials are exciting us now. But this trial was conducted by the English Governor-General, Warren Hastings, one of the men who founded England's might and first introduced Western civilisation into India. He considered it a progressive act, and we, if we think historically, will probably agree with him. My Warren Hastings, then, comes to realise that " humanity can only be instilled into the human race by means of cannons," and to the people who compel him, through their humane principles, to act less humanely than he would have liked, he says: " For twenty-two years, whilst the River Ganges was now just, now unjust, it has been my experience that a slight quiver of the hand, caused by humanity, has devastated whole stretches of country. You, my humane sirs, do not know it, but it is you who drive me to inhumanity."

Humanity only by means of guns

I believe that during and after the war we have all had manifold reasons for revising our views on abstention from violence and reflecting earnestly on its use. If such *reflexions sur la violence*, which are intended to justify Lenin,

"Reflexions sur la violence"

are also used by Mussolini for self-justification —Hitler has probably scarcely heard of the name of Georges Sorel—they do not lose in truth. There is a difference between the bandit who shoots at a passer-by and the policeman who shoots at the bandit.

Problem for a writer of responsibility

Expressed plainly and simply, this is the problem which to-day presents itself to every writer of any responsibility. Since Socialist economy can hardly be established without a temporary modification of what is to-day called democracy, which do you prefer—that the great mass of the people should have less meat, bread, and butter and, instead, you greater freedom of writing, or that you should have less freedom of writing and the great mass of the people more bread, meat, and butter?

That, for a writer of responsibility, is no easy problem.

Shakespeare's Latin

It is not difficult to find fault with the Soviet Union, and it earns the fault-finders much approbation. There are both material and moral defects which are easy to discover; they are not concealed, and it is true that, for a West

European, life in Moscow is still by no means comfortable. Nevertheless, anyone who underlines the shortcomings and relegates the big things which are to be seen there to footnotes accuses himself more than the Soviet Union. He is like a critic who notices first and foremost in a poet of genius that his commas are not in the right places. In the first German notice on Shakespeare we read: " Knew little Latin and no Greek at all."

At bottom, all objections to the Soviet Union by Western intellectuals can be summarised under two heads, the one moral and the other æsthetic. Under the moral head comes the criticism that in consequence of the difference in incomes new classes must of necessity arise; and under the æsthetic, the criticism that the Soviet regime tends to depersonalisation of the individual, thereby reducing all to one monotonous level. Thus in the end the æsthetic objection and the moral objection are levelled at precisely opposite tendencies.

Beware of inequality, beware of equality!

There is, nevertheless, a grain of truth in both. If, indeed, the apostles of equality maintain that a certain petit-bourgeois mentality is developing amongst the more highly paid

workers, peasants, and "black-coated" workers, very different from that proletarian heroism which these moralists of ours think they are entitled to find when making a trip to the Soviet Union, they are not entirely wrong. The apostles of inequality, for their part, fear that the standardisation of opinions will have a kind of flattening effect, and that in the end the materialisation of Socialism in the Union will produce nothing more than a gigantic State of petit-bourgeois people of unrelieved mediocrity, and this misgiving is not quite without foundation either; for if a community has reached a definite economic phase, and, what is more, has risen up from extreme indigence to the beginnings of prosperity, then it inevitably develops certain petit-bourgeois characteristics; and the raising of the mental standard, operating in the same way as the material prosperity, produced in its first stages a certain monotonous uniformity of opinion and taste. I have already pointed out that the elements of all knowledge must of necessity be expressed in the same forms and formulas, so that at the beginning of education "conformism" is unavoidable. But it is certain that,

The grain of truth

with the growth of prosperity, the petit-bourgeois mentality will disappear just as quickly as the notorious conformism does with advancing education.

A consideration of all the facts reveals that there is still much that is problematical within the Soviet frontiers; but what Goethe writes of the individual applies to the State also: "Something important always fascinates us, and if we recognise its merits, let us leave well alone what seems to be problematical in it."

Goethe and the fault-finders

The air which one breathes in the West is stale and foul. In the Western civilisation there is no longer clarity and resolution. One does not dare to defend oneself against the oncoming barbarism with the fist or even only with strong words; one does it half-heartedly, with vague gestures, and the declarations of those in authority against Fascism are sugared over and much be-clausedd. Who has not been sickened by the feebleness and hypocrisy with which these people in authority have reacted to the invasion of the Spanish Republic by the Fascists?

The bad air of Western civilisation

One breathes again when one comes from this oppressive atmosphere of a counterfeit

democracy and hypocritical humanism into the invigorating atmosphere of the Soviet Union. Here there is no hiding behind mystical, meaningless slogans, but a sober ethics prevails, really *more geometrico constructa*, and this ethics alone determines the plan according to which the Union is being built up. Thus they are building there by a new method, and are using completely new material. But the time of experimentation lies far behind them. There is still everywhere débris and dirty scaffolding, but already the framework of the mighty building is rising up pure and clear-cut. It is a very tower of Babel, but one which wants not to bring the people nearer to the sky, but the sky nearer to the people. And the work has succeeded. They have not allowed their languages to become entangled; they all understand one another.

The tower of Babel

It does one good after all the compromise of the West to see an achievement such as this, to which a man can say, "Yes," "Yes," "Yes," with all his heart; and because it seemed ungrateful to keep this "Yes" within me, I wrote this book.

"Yes," "Yes," "Yes"

THE END